

Succession to Prophet Muhammad
In-Depth Study of His Speech

AT GHADEER KHUMM

Abd Al-Wahab
Ibn Nasir Al-Tuairi



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ABD AL-WAHAB IBN NASIR AL-TURAIKI

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Translated and Edited by

Adil Salahi

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INTRODUCTION

He was on his way towards Madinah, a city he loved and one that loved him in return. He had just bid farewell to Makkah, which always held a special place for him, ever since he left it a few years earlier, leaving his heart behind. This time he was accompanied by people who were very close to him, and by a large number of new friends.

Every step he took told him that he would never go back to his old city, this was a journey of no return. Life is short, and the hours ticked away. He has something to say, and he was arranging his thoughts and words very carefully.

Around him this community of believers was feeling very tired, coming to the end of a long journey, and he is dotting the letters of a sentence that is now complete.

He stops at a place, al-Ghadeer [*Ghadeer* means a stream or a small water course], between Makkah, the city he has just left, and Madinah, the city awaiting him. This area will take away all tiredness. He stands there and asks all those with him to attend him. He calls on them to come and listen. All of them hold him dear: his place is not on the high ground, but right in their hearts.

He looks at them, surveying his companions: every one of them has something to distinguish him; every one comes first. Yet, Ali, the one he loved best, his special friend who was always ready to lay down his life for him, comes ahead of them all; before the first companion. Hence, the words he has to say were to Ali, and for him. The place, al-Ghadeer, listens so as to be a witness to this special honour.

It was an awesome occasion, with people listening attentively and watching with interest. Everyone was trying to find a point where he could see the beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as he made his speech with clear and strong words. What one heart might forget, another would clearly remember. Humans may bury something deeply, but the earth would retain it for all time.

Many years later, at the same place, at al-Ghadeer, I thought about the words that were spoken, trying to fathom their significance. I tried to determine Ali's position in the hearts of his own companions and in our hearts today.

There at al-Ghadeer our souls stopped, just as did those halted there by the Prophet (peace be upon him). We listen with our feelings, just as they listened. With our hearts we feel the great words of God's messenger (peace be upon him) and with our minds we consider and contemplate what has been reported to us of what was said on this great occasion. Feelings cannot prevent rational reflection, nor does rational reflection extinguish the glowing feelings.

Let us then proceed together to those great trees at al-Ghadeer. There we will recall a great event and an important speech; a declaration, a command and a signal of farewell. There he delivered the last speech as his blessed life was coming to a close.

Abd al-Wahhab al-Turairi
Madinah
2 Safar 1437 AH; 13 November 2015

GHADEER KHUMM

It was Ghadeer Khumm that witnessed the crowning of Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abu Talib with his ultimate status. His distinction was not declared there, because his great characteristics had already shone one after the other over a long period. It was Ali who was described by the Prophet himself as the one ‘who is loved only by believers and hated only by hypocrites’.¹ On another occasion the Prophet asked him: ‘Will you not be happy that you are to me like Aaron was to Moses, except that there will not be another prophet after me?’² He also told him: ‘You belong to me and I belong to you.’³ The Prophet declared that Ali ‘loved God and His messenger and was loved by God and His messenger’.⁴

How happy must Ali have felt as he went through life knowing that God, and His Supreme Company, loved him as did God’s messenger (peace be upon him).

1 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 642 and 731; Muslim, hadith No. 78.

2 Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 1,490; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,706 and 4,416; Muslim, hadith No. 2,404.

3 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 857 and 931; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 2,699 and 4,251.

4 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 778 and 1,117; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,009 and 4,210; Muslim, hadith Nos 2,404–2,406.

Ali was there at the start of Islamic history and as days passed, Islam was always present in his consciousness and his mind. Right from the first day of Islam, Ali lived with the Prophet, day after day, ready to give and to strive hard for its cause. Twenty-three years he spent with the Prophet, who assigned to him the hardest and most important of tasks. Over twenty-three years people responded to the Prophet's message and joined him, one group after another, but Ali was the first of them and the closest to the Prophet.⁵ For twenty-three years Ali was the closest to the Prophet in love; and he was his relative, his in-law and his neighbour.

How do we define Ali's position in relation to the Prophet? Do we say that he was his beloved one? The Prophet said of him: 'He is loved by God and His messenger.'⁶ Do we say that he belonged to the same family? He was the Prophet's cousin, with their fathers being full brothers. Do we say his son-in-law? Ali was married to Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter and the first lady of all mankind. He favoured him to be her husband and entrusted her to him. Or do we say that he was his neighbour? Ali's home was the closest to the Prophet's, right in the middle of the Prophet's homes. When Abdullah ibn Umar was asked about Ali, the answer he gave to his questioner was: 'Look at his home in relation to the Prophet's homes.'⁷

⁵ Related by Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 35,938; al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith Nos 8,439 and 8,440.

⁶ As in footnote 4.

⁷ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,704, 4,515 and 4,650; al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith No. 8,438.

Ibn Umar's answer meant that this was sufficient to indicate his closeness to the Prophet.

When the Prophet mentioned his sons, he actually referred to Ali's sons. The Prophet said: 'This son of mine is a master. God may well make him the means to bring about peace between two great parties of Muslims.'⁸ The one to whom he referred was none other than al-Hasan ibn Ali. The Prophet also said: 'When I saw these two sons of mine walking, I could not help it. I just interrupted my speech and went down [to pick them up].'⁹ These two children were none other than al-Hasan and al-Husayn, sons of Ali.

Ali was the Prophet's right hand, which he stretched to all, and his sword, with which he hit his enemy. When the Prophet said: 'Ali, rise,' this signified that he faced a hard situation and he called on Ali to handle it. He said this to him on the day of the Battle of Badr, and Ali was the first to fight a duel.¹⁰ When the Prophet had to leave Makkah in secret to migrate to Madinah, he entrusted Ali to deliver to the people of Makkah the precious articles which they had given to the Prophet for safe keeping.¹¹

It was Ali who gave the Prophet's announcement regarding the treaties he had made with unbelievers. Surah 9 was

⁸ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith No. 2,704.

⁹ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 22,995; Abu Dawood, hadith No. 1,109; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 3,774.

¹⁰ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 948; al-Bukhari hadith Nos 3,965–3,969 and 4,744; Muslim, hadith No. 3,033.

¹¹ Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, pp. 485 and 493; al-Tabari, Tarikh, vol. 2, p. 382.

revealed to the Prophet, starting with the order to make this announcement on the day of the grand pilgrimage so that all Arabia would be aware of it. Ali travelled to Makkah, where on the day of the pilgrimage he recited to the pilgrims the opening of this surah which gave the people notice of the termination of all treaties they had with the Muslim state. He also announced that from that time on, no unbeliever would be allowed to perform the pilgrimage to the Kaabah and no one would be allowed to perform the *tawaf* around the Kaabah in the nude.¹² The Kaabah became the centre of the monotheistic faith and Makkah was the city of Islam. All this was completed with Ali making these announcements on behalf of the Prophet.

Those twenty-three years culminated in large groups of people embracing the divine faith. God completed the revelation of His religion, thus perfecting His favours on the Muslim community, and the Muslims had just finished completing the fifth pillar of Islam, performing the pilgrimage with God's messenger (peace be upon him). At this point, as they were returning to Madinah, the Prophet halted his companions to declare the crowning of Ali, establishing his full status and giving him his proper high position. It was here at Ghadeer Khumm that Ali was honoured, and his great status declared in front of an honourable community, so that there would be no ambiguity about his position.

12 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 4,594 and 5,977; al-Bukhari hadith Nos 369 and 4,655–4,657; Muslim, hadith No. 1,347.

Let us go, then, to Ghadeer Khumm to learn the news. We will stop there and listen as though we were with the Prophet when he halted the people and told them to listen to him. It was there that the Prophet spoke about Ali and we will learn the news and live the event. Great was the speaker (peace be upon him) and great was the one who was the subject of his speech. Hence, it is a noble discourse about Ali that we will hear, his great position and his honour in the mind of every Muslim man and woman.

BEFORE THE EVENT

The event at al-Ghadeer took place after Ali had done some things that some of the Prophet's companions did not understand. They were upset by Ali's actions and complained to the Prophet. As a result of their attitude, which was the start of a strained relationship with Ali, his noble character was emphasized and his fine qualities were crowned, thus making him worthy of support from all believers, men and women. Consolidated from its various reports, here is the story that unfolded:¹³

After the Battles of Hawazin and Taif, the Prophet sent Khalid ibn al-Waleed to Yemen to fight some of its tribes who were hostile to Islam. Khalid fought them and achieved victory, gaining much property and taking prisoners who were enslaved. He sent a message to the Prophet, requesting him to send someone to divide the war gains. The Prophet sent Ali,

13 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 1,374, 2,359, 23,036 and 22,976; al-Bukhari hadith Nos 2,299, 4,349 and 4,350; Muslim, hadith Nos 1,218 and 1,317; Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah, vol. 2, p. 603; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwah, vol. 5, pp. 398–399; Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wal-Nihayah, vol. 7, pp. 295, 390–392, 665–668 and vol. 11, pp. 59–64.

instructing him to continue the fight against the rebellious tribes and to take the war gains and divide them according to the Islamic rule that gives one-fifth to the Prophet, as head of state, and the remaining four-fifths to be distributed among the army. The Prophet gave Ali a written letter to the hostile tribes, with instructions that he announce its contents before starting any fight against them. He also gave instructions that those who were in Khalid's army had a choice: either to go back to their people or to continue their mission with Ali. This was a recognized military practice, so that different soldiers fight different battles and soldiers are not absent from their homes for a very long time.

Ali took over the command of the army from Khalid, who delivered to him the war gains. Ali also gave the soldiers the choice either to return home or to continue with him and then went ahead with the mission as assigned to him. When he approached Hamdan, the rebels came out and the two parties stood facing each other. Ali spread his army in one row and led them in prayer, then advanced towards Hamdan and read them the Prophet's letter, calling on them to accept Islam. They all accepted Islam and Ali wrote to the Prophet telling him that they had done so. When the letter was read out to the Prophet, he prostrated himself in gratitude to God and said: 'Peace be to Hamdan.'

Ali divided the war gains according to the Islamic rulings, dividing them into five portions, four of which went to the army and one portion to the Prophet. Among the women

taken as slaves there was a pretty one who came out in the Prophet's portion. He then divided this portion into five shares and the woman fell into the share of the Prophet's household. He then divided this share into five sub-shares and she came out in the share due to Ali's family. He took her to himself. In the morning the soldiers saw him coming out of his tent, having taken a bath, covering his head which was still wet. Some soldiers felt upset, considering that he had favoured himself over them.

Both Buraydah ibn al-Hussayb al-Aslami, a companion of the Prophet, and Khalid ibn al-Waleed were dissatisfied with Ali over some past issues. Buraydah said to Khalid: 'Do you see what this man is doing?' Khalid raised the matter with Ali and said: 'How does this come about?' Ali explained: 'You saw this slave woman who was part of the war gains. When I divided the war gains and shared them out, she came out in the Prophet's portion, then in the Prophet's household, then she belonged to Ali's family and I took her for myself.'

Khalid (may God be pleased with him) wrote a letter to the Prophet telling him what Ali had done. Buraydah (may God be pleased with him) said to Khalid: 'Send me as your messenger so that I can confirm what you have written.' Khalid gave him the letter to take to the Prophet.

Buraydah reported: 'When I arrived at the Prophet's, I mentioned Ali and criticized him. I said to the Prophet that Ali favoured himself with a slave woman who was in the war

gains. I read out Khalid's letter to the Prophet and said several times: 'Khalid tells the truth.' I normally looked down when I spoke. When I finished I looked up and I saw the Prophet's face had changed and reddened. He held my hand and the letter, and said: 'Buraydah, do you hate Ali?' I said: 'Yes, messenger of God.' He said: 'Then do not hate him. If you love him, then love him more. Whoever owes me allegiance owes allegiance to Ali. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, Ali's share in the one-fifth portion is better and greater than a slave woman.' Buraydah (may God be pleased with him) said: 'When God's messenger said these words, no one was dearer to me than Ali.'

Perhaps Khalid's and Buraydah's feelings against Ali were shared by others in the army, and what Khalid wrote to the Prophet was to report the feelings expressed by others.

People in Ali's army felt that their camels were exhausted, and they sought his permission to ride the camels that had been given as zakat dues and to use these for carrying their loads, so that their own camels could be rested. Ali refused and told them: 'You only have the same share in these as the rest of the Muslim community.' Perhaps they were unhappy with his response on this point as well.

By this time, the Prophet had left Madinah, heading toward Makkah to perform his farewell pilgrimage. Ali had also completed his mission and started on his way back.

He wanted to travel quickly so that he could join the Prophet in his pilgrimage and to take the remainder of the Prophet's sacrificial animals. He chose someone to be his deputy, as commander of the army, and left. He entered in the state of consecration [i.e. *ihram*], which is obligatory for anyone travelling to Makkah for pilgrimage or umrah. As he did so, he declared: 'My Lord, I am doing the pilgrimage in the same way as Your messenger.'

Ali arrived in Makkah after the Prophet had completed his *tawaf* and *sa'i*, the starting duties of pilgrimage, and encamped at al-Abtah. His companions, who had not brought their sacrificial animals with them, had released themselves from consecration, which meant that the restrictions imposed by this state did not apply to them. Ali went to his wife, Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. She had released herself from consecration after having performed her umrah. He saw her wearing a coloured dress, and that she had applied kohl to her eyelashes and sprayed her tent to give it a good smell. He wondered at her condition and questioned her about releasing herself from the state of consecration. She told him: 'My father told me to do so.' Like young husbands, Ali went to see her father to complain about her behaviour. He said: 'Messenger of God, Fatimah has released herself from consecration, applied kohl and wore a coloured dress, claiming that you told her to do so.' The Prophet said: 'She said the truth; she is right; she is right. I have told her to do it.' The Prophet then asked Ali: 'How did you declare your intention of doing the pilgrimage?' He told him that he declared that he was doing the same as the Prophet. He had the sacrificial animals

with him. The Prophet then told him: ‘Do not release yourself from consecration.’ Ali completed his pilgrimage with the Prophet joining him in all duties at all sites.¹⁴

On the day of sacrifice, the Prophet ordered that his sacrificial animals be brought forward. The total of what the Prophet brought with him and what Ali brought from Yemen was 100 camels. The Prophet said: ‘Call Abu Hasan to come.’ When Ali came over, the Prophet held his spear at the top end and told Ali to hold it at the lower end. The Prophet stabbed the camels in the neck. The camels pushed each other to come forward and be slaughtered before the others.

When the Prophet had slaughtered sixty-three camels, as he was then sixty-three years old, he told Ali to slaughter the remainder on his own. He made Ali his partner in his sacrifice. He then told Ali to attend to the distribution of the meat to people, saying: ‘Divide all the meat, equipment and hide among the people. Do not give any butcher anything of this. We will pay the butchers. Take a piece of meat from every camel and put them all in one saucepan to cook. We will then eat of their meat and sip of their sauce.’

14 The point at issue here is the method of offering the pilgrimage with the umrah on the same trip. If a person intends to do both, and brings his sacrifice with him from outside the Haram area, then he or she cannot release themselves from the state of consecration until they have offered the sacrifice on 10 Dhul-Hijjah. Such a person combines both the umrah and the pilgrimage and offers them at the same time. The alternative method, followed by Fatimah at the Prophet’s own instructions, applies to anyone who buys the sacrifice in the Haram area. They offer the umrah on arrival in Makkah and release themselves from consecration until they start the pilgrimage duties on 8 Dhul-Hijjah.

The sight of Ali holding the spear behind the Prophet and the proximity between them indicates that their souls and hearts were very close. This is a sight that rarely happens between siblings, let alone friends and companions. We note that God has blessed Ali with this situation to bring him closer to the Prophet and to increase love between them.

The image of Ali holding the lower part of the Prophet's spear, standing behind him as the Prophet slaughtered his sacrifice, one for each year of his life, describes Ali's own life with the Prophet. The Prophet spent his life delivering his message, and Ali was with him, protecting his back and defending him from the front. Hence, he shared with the Prophet the sacrifice that represented his blessed life, just as he took part in his efforts and struggle.

We should perhaps reflect that the Prophet took Ali as his partner in his sacrifice, but did not give such partnership to his daughter Fatimah, or to any of his wives, close as they were to him. Nor did he make any one of his companions his partner.

The scene is completed when we imagine how the Prophet and Ali sat close to the same saucepan in which they cooked the meat of their sacrifice. They ate of the meat and sipped of the sauce. That was not like any great banquet; it was a meal from the sacrifice they offered to God, so as to complete the greatest act of worship, on the greatest day, in the most sacred of places. They were delighted at having completed their pilgrimage, and their love added to their delight.

How can I imagine their feelings, close as they were to each other with the noblest bond of love? I can imagine the scene, as if I was standing there. Even normal looks appear to me very significant, and I am overwhelmed with feelings that I cannot describe. My readers can try to imagine the scene and I have no doubt that they will experience the same feelings. All these images tell us that Ali held a special position with the Prophet.

All this was a practical manifestation of what the Prophet said to Ali: ‘You belong to me and I belong to you.’¹⁵ May peace and God’s blessings be given in abundance to Prophet Muhammad and his household.

Let us turn back to the army Ali had left when he moved at speed to join the Prophet. The man he appointed as his deputy was apparently an easy going person, and the army knew that they could get from him whatever they wanted. They requested of him to allow what Ali had refused them and he granted their requests. Thus, they used the zakat camels to give their own camels some rest and he also gave them suits, which Ali had with him. When Ali completed his pilgrimage, the Prophet said to him: ‘Go ahead and rejoin your people.’ Ali went towards them and they received him wearing their new suits. He said to his deputy: ‘How come they have these suits?’ He said: ‘I have allowed them this so that they will appear in a fine shape

15 The same as footnote 3.

when they join the people here.' Ali said to him: 'Order them to take them off before you go to God's messenger.' He did so and all the suits were returned to the army's store. Ali then noticed that the zakat camels were in a state of tiredness and realized that they had been ridden. Again he blamed his deputy for letting this happen.

The army felt that Ali's orders were too hard. Some of them intended to complain to the Prophet against Ali, protesting against what they felt to be harsh measures, depriving them of what they considered themselves to be entitled to. Probably people in the army became attached to what they received, and when it was taken back they felt aggrieved.

It appears that others beside Khalid and Buraydah were upset. It was reported by Abu Saeed al-Khudri,¹⁶ and it seems that this feeling prevailed among the army and they were talking about it.

Perhaps one of the reasons why feelings against Ali were widespread was that most people in the army had embraced Islam only recently. They did not have the same experience of jihad and the rulings concerning war gains as Ali. Therefore, the Prophet dealt with the situation by making a public address that removed ill-feelings. He showed Ali's merits and raised his status. He said that such blame cannot be attached to a person of that calibre.

16 Al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwah*, vol. 5, p. 398; Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, vol. 43, p. 200.

When we examine what Ali did, we find that he was right in all of his actions. The slave woman he took for himself was not taken out of the total war gains. He did not take her away from anyone who had her as his share nor did he favour himself in any way. He simply divided the war gains and she was in the portion belonging to the Prophet as head of state. He then divided that and she was in the Prophet's own share, and then he divided this share and she was in Ali's family's share. He simply used what belonged to him. Hence, the Prophet said: 'By Him who holds my soul in His hand, Ali's share in the one-fifth portion is more than that; it is more than a slave woman.' Thus, no blame was attached to him.

The clothes which were taken from the army stores were not distributed to the soldiers. To wear these during travel would make them used. Ali knew the rulings applicable to war gains better than the rest of the army. He had been with the Prophet ever since his first expedition and the first battle he fought. He had learnt that using war gains in any way other than what God has legislated is forbidden. What was not divided was forbidden to use. Hence, he ordered that they should take those suits off because they were wearing what did not belong to them as others had claim to them.

The same applied to his refusal that the zakat camels should be ridden or loaded with the belongings of the army. These belonged to the poor and the needy, as well as others who are rightful beneficiaries of zakat. Ali sought to protect those people's rights because they could not protect their own rights as they were far away. It was not right that soldiers in the

army should rest their own mounts and exhaust the zakat camels instead. He told them: ‘You only have a share in them like other Muslims.’ Those beneficiaries of zakat had their shares in them and no one else had a claim to them. It was not right that these camels should become exhausted before they are given to their rightful beneficiaries.

May God be pleased with Ali. He did not tell the army to return their suits so that he could take them for himself or sell them. They belonged to others who had greater need. Nor did he rest the zakat camels for any purpose of his own. He was one who could not benefit by zakat under any circumstances.

The displeasure the Prophet’s companions in the army felt with Ali’s actions appears similar to the displeasure felt by the Ansar when the Prophet divided the war gains after the Battle of Hunayn. He gave newcomers to Islam large gifts, in hundreds of camels, but gave the Ansar nothing. They were upset and made their feelings known to him. The Prophet called them to a meeting and explained that he made those gifts to people hoping that they would become stronger in their new faith. He trusted that the Ansar, in their strong faith and noble souls, were above material gain. They were satisfied and pleased with his action.¹⁷ The Prophet gave those gifts to newcomers to Islam, but not to his relatives, or members of his family, or those of his companions who strove with him since the early days of Islam. Nor did he take anything for himself.

17 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 12,730, 12,766 and 13,913; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,778 and 4,330–4,334; Muslim, hadith No. 1,059.

May God be pleased with Ali, Abu al-Hasan. Throughout his life he was happy with a very simple life, with few pleasures. He was looking to future happiness, in the life to come, with the Supreme Society. His was the closest life to that of the Prophet. His home was like the Prophet's homes, with low ceilings and walls that were close together, and very simple furniture. He had no servants at home. His wife, the first lady of mankind, ground the wheat and barley using a stone mill until her hands had blisters and her skin hardened. She swept the floor and baked her bread in an open oven, with the heat affecting her face. She carried filled water skins until her shoulders became sore. The Prophet was aware of all this, but he did not favour them with any special gift. He preferred that they should continue to look for reward from God in the life to come.

The Prophet's own daughter, Ali's wife, the first lady of mankind, one day went to her father's home to ask him to give her a servant, as she had heard that a number of slaves were sent to him. She hoped that he would give her a servant who would attend to household work. She did not find the Prophet in Aishah's home, and as the two women were very friendly and loved each other Fatimah told Aishah what she wanted from her father and went back home. When the Prophet came home in the evening Aishah told him of Fatimah's visit and request. The Prophet went straight to Fatimah's home and found her and her husband having just gone to bed. Ali said: 'We had a small blanket. If we used it lengthwise our sides were uncovered, and if we used it the other way, our feet and heads were exposed. We wanted to rise, but the Prophet said: "Stay where

you are.” The Prophet sat between them as they remained in bed. Ali added: ‘I felt the coldness of his foot on my chest. He then said: “Shall I point something out to you better than what you have requested of me?” We said: “Yes, please.” He said: “When you go to bed say *Subhan Allah* (i.e. Limitless is God in His glory) thirty-three times, *al-Hamdu lillah* (i.e. all praise be to God) thirty-three times, and *Allah akbar* (i.e. God is supreme) thirty-four times. This is better for you than a servant. By God, I shall not give you and leave the people of al-Suffah¹⁸ starving when I have nothing to give them. I shall sell these slaves and spend the proceeds on those poor people.”¹⁹

It was such education that Ali and Fatimah learnt from the Prophet. Then God gave His messenger plentiful resources, and he gave gifts in hundreds of camels, but he gave Ali nothing, allocating nothing special to him. He divided money in large quantities, but he gave Ali nothing. The Prophet gave some of his companions land and minerals, but did not give Ali even the width of a stick.

Ali lived in the Prophet’s company in the same style as the Prophet. His home was as humble and simple as the Prophet’s home and his resources barely sufficient for life’s needs. When

18 Al-Suffah was an area next to the Prophet’s mosque, where people from different tribes came to join the Prophet as Muslims. They were very poor and depended on the Prophet for their living needs. Muslims in Madinah always helped, but at times of hardship these people might be hungry with little food available to them. The Prophet felt that helping them was a more important priority than giving his daughter a slave to serve her, so he would sell the slave in order to buy food for those poor people.

19 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 596 and 838; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,113, 3,705, 5,361 and 6,318; Muslim, hadith Nos 2,727–2,728.

the Prophet passed away Ali spent the rest of his life in the same fashion, despite the plentiful wealth that came to the Muslim community. New lands were conquered and huge resources were available. Muslims were happy to live more comfortably, except for Ali who continued to lead the same simple life that he had during the Prophet's lifetime.

When he became the Caliph and the resources of the state came under his disposal, he did not charge the nation anything nor take anything for himself. Nothing is reported of him except a watchful eye over how the money was spent for the benefit of the nation.²⁰

His capital was at Kufah in southern Iraq. Whenever funds became available in the state treasury, he would announce to the people to come over and he would divide the money among them. In one year, he had already given the people three payments when he received the taxes from Isfahan. He addressed the people, praising and glorifying God, then said: 'People, come and take your fourth payment. I shall not hold it in the treasury for you.' He divided the money, then ordered that the treasury be cleansed. He prayed a voluntary prayer and said: 'Pleasures of this world! You may tempt someone other than me.'

No one recognized the triviality of this present life better than Ali and no one was less tempted by it than he. He used to address it, saying: 'Do you want to try me? Do you want to

20 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 12, p. 309.

tempt me? You can try with someone else, for I have divorced you thrice. Your duration is short; your comforts are trivial; and you are worthless.²¹

Ali's ascetism was not due to any inability or lack of knowledge of how to pursue comforts. He simply preferred the life to come, and in pursuing this better end he was keen to give people their dues of the money that came to him, placing himself last. As reported in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, he said: 'Had I so wished, I would have known the way to pure honey, the best of grains and the finest clothes. Far be it from me to seek the pleasure of choosing the best of foods, when there may be in Hijaz or Yamamah people who cannot aspire to have a loaf of bread or who do not remember when they last had a full meal.'²²

How splendid! Compare these words about a poor person in Hijaz or Yamamah with the Prophet's words when he told Ali and his wife: 'By God, I shall not give you and leave the people of al-Suffah starving when I have nothing to give them.'²³ When we look at the two statements together we realize how Ali understood what the Prophet was aiming at, and he certainly followed his guidance.

Hence, Ali's four years as the Caliph saw him dividing money among the people, leaving nothing of it in the state treasury. He never built himself a palace, nor took for himself

21 Ahmad, *Fada'il al-Sahabah*, hadith Nos 882, 884 and 905; Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 32,900.

22 Al-Shareef al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 16, p. 369.

23 As in footnote 17.

any farmland or any portion of public money. He had only his small salary, allocated to him from the public treasury. When he was killed, the master of all Muslims, his son al-Hasan presented an account of his father's property. He said: 'He left no money, neither in gold nor in silver, except for 700 dirhams which he drew from his allocation and had earmarked to buy a servant for his family.'²⁴

He had to take this 700 dirhams as an advance against his salary because he could not have saved this sum, small as it was. Indeed his four years as Caliph, at the end of his life, did not see him enjoying power, exercising authority or revelling in its luxuries. They were years of struggle and great endeavour. Perhaps they were the hardest of his life. He spent these years trying hard to unite the people and prevent strife. He was running a population that did not live the sort of life he had led alongside the Prophet. He was struggling to prevent strife and fighting rebels and al-Khawarij. Indeed his time as Caliph was a struggle to put the Muslim community back on the right course and to prevent discord. Ultimately, the strife claimed his life and he was assassinated as he walked to the mosque to offer the dawn prayer.

Ali was in the lead of believers who have always been true to what they have vowed before God and remained so to the end of their lives, permitting no change whatsoever. Ali was one of those who strove hard, sacrificing much and going to meet their Lord unburdened with anything of this world. They sought

²⁴ Al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith No. 8,354; Ibn Hibban, hadith No. 6,936.

nothing of their reward in this life, preferring to have it in full from God, the Bountiful.

When we say that we love Ali, it is because God in His majesty loves him, and because the Prophet used to clearly declare that he loved him. We love the man to whom the Prophet said: ‘You belong to me and I belong to you.’²⁵ When we love Ali and declare that we owe allegiance to him, we are simply fulfilling the Prophet’s own statement: ‘Whoever owes me allegiance owes allegiance to Ali.’²⁶ As we love Ali, we hope that we are fulfilling the requirements of our faith. It is in reference to Ali that the Prophet said: ‘None loves him except a believer, and none hates him except a hypocrite.’²⁷

We love Ali because we love the one whom the Prophet declared to be one of the dwellers of heaven. He said: ‘And Ali will be in heaven.’²⁸ Perhaps by loving him we may be with him in heaven, as the Prophet says: ‘Everyone will be with those he or she loves.’²⁹

25 As in footnote 3.

26 As in footnote 34.

27 As in footnote 1.

28 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 1,629 and 1,631; Abu Dawood, hadith No. 4,649; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 3,748.

29 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 3,717, 12,013 and 13,068; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 6,168–6,171; Muslim, hadith No. 2,640.

GADEER KHUMM: TIME AND PLACE

It was Sunday, 18 Dhul-Hijjah 10 AH, corresponding to 16 March 632 CE. The Prophet had just completed his farewell pilgrimage and bid farewell to the people, saying: ‘Perhaps I shall not meet you again after this year.’³⁰ People dispersed in different directions. Ibn [Abbas said: ‘People left Mina, going to their respective places.’³¹ Those who stayed with the Prophet were the people of Madinah and those who lived in areas lying on his way.

God’s messenger had left Makkah on Wednesday morning, 14 Dhul-Hijjah, arriving at Ghadeer Khumm on the fifth day of his journey. Ghadeer Khumm is close to the route between Makkah and Madinah, 159 kilometres to the north of Makkah and 196 kilometres to the south of Madinah. It is only

30 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 14,553 and 14,946; Muslim, hadith No. 1,297; Abu Dawood, hadith No. 1,970; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 886.

31 Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 1,936; al-Bukhari, hadith No. 1,755; Muslim, hadith Nos 1,327–1,328.

6.5 kilometres to the east of al-Juhfah and 18 kilometres to the east of Rabigh.³² Today it is known as al-Ghurabah.³³

Whoever wants to go to al-Ghadeer has to travel nearly half the distance between Makkah and Madinah. It was not on the route that caravans used when heading towards Madinah, it lies somewhat to the east, but travellers used to make a diversion to it because of the water available in the stream. The land there is flat and easy to traverse, with thick trees in an area that was called Khumm; hence the name, Ghadeer Khumm, which means the Khumm stream. As it had shade and flat ground, it was one of the places travellers stopped to rest and replenish their water supplies.

This was perhaps one of the reasons the Prophet chose this place to address the people. It was easy for those travelling with him to gather and sit down around him. As such, it is similar to Wadi Uranah, where the Prophet delivered his speech on the Day of Arafat during his pilgrimage.³⁴ Wadi Uranah is also a wide flat space where people could easily gather.

When I visited al-Ghadeer this year (1437 AH, 2015) I met a few elderly people who were born and grew up in the area around it, close to al-Juhfah valley. I learnt from them what al-Ghadeer was like before the new changes crept in. They told

³² These figures are according to the aerial distance between places, not the distance on the route between them.

³³ Yaqoot al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 2, pp. 111 and 389; Atiq al-Balladi, *Mu'jam Ma'alim al-Hijaz*, p. 1,243.

³⁴ Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 18,966, 20,695, 22,260 and 23,497; al-Bukhari, hadith No. 4,403; Muslim, hadith No. 1,218.

me that there used to be several water springs in the valley and there were thick trees, farms and date trees.

Al-Ghadeer was at the edge of the valley and was not very wide. Indeed its area was only a few metres long and a few metres wide. Water poured into it from a cleft in the rocks above. The water level remained the same, hardly ever dropping low or rising high, despite the continuous flow of water into it from the spring above. When there was heavy rain and the water flowed heavily, then al-Ghadeer would flood and its area expanded into scores of metres long and wide. However, the spring dried up and consequently al-Ghadeer became dry.

In 1406 AH, the wadi flooded heavily and al-Ghadeer was inundated. Yet the place remained the same, telling its old story. Today, it is filled with earth and a concrete bridge has been built over it for the railway. The place is no longer there, except for a small, buried area at the edge of the valley, next to the corner of the bridge. A passer-by took the trouble to write there 'Ghadeer Khumm'. Perhaps he should have written 'Ghadeer Khumm was here.'

THE PLACE AND ITS MEMORY

What does this place remember, if it has a memory? What will the earth tell us of its news, if it can speak to us? These questions weighed on my mind as I walked in the area that was Ghadeer Khumm. I imagined life permeating through the rocks of the nearby mountain, the branches of the trees and the flat earth at the bottom of the valley. I thought I heard the footsteps of people around me and the echo of the words spoken here.

I stopped at the place where al-Ghadeer had been shortly before midday, which was the time when the Prophet had addressed his companions, and walked around it. I imagined myself travelling back in time. As I walked, I thought perhaps my steps were the same as the steps of old. I echoed Ibn Umar's words as he said: 'Perhaps the hoof of one camel falls over another.'³⁵

Was God's messenger here? Did he walk in this area? Did he breathe this air? Was it here that he sat, prayed and delivered his speech? These mountains around me: did they listen to the

35 Related by Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 34,648; al-Bukhari, hadith No. 483.

Prophet's address? Did they echo his prayers, his recitation of the Qur'an and glorification of God, like the mountains sang God's praises with Prophet David.

I could imagine the Prophet's companions here, as I walked around al-Ghadeer and looked at the tall trees around me in the valley. I could see them sitting in the shade of the trees, then gathering quickly as they heard the call: 'Come to prayer; all of you.' I looked at the open valley in front of me and I imagined how those thousands of the Prophet's companions gathered close together, around God's messenger, trying to be close to him. But the one who was next to him was Ali.

I imagined them listening to the Prophet's speech, with their eyes fixed on him and they were all ears as they listened to him. They looked at him with love and great respect. They were beaming with delight because they were his companions. His words were received by their hearts well before their ears.

The very mountains and the stones and earth are almost speaking to me, telling the story. I lived the event in this very place. The place has its status and the scene was great, awesome. Everything was here. Here was God's messenger.

THE SPEECH

The Prophet's speech was preceded by certain steps to prepare the people to listen to something important. A suitable place was chosen, namely the spacious area at al-Ghadeer. The time was right, on 18 Dhul-Hijjah, with the people having finished their pilgrimage. They had completed their mission in Makkah and were on their way home, but they still had some distance to travel to Madinah. Thus, they were still not occupied with their immediate business and earning their living. They were without immediate concerns and ready to listen and understand. The hour was right, after Zuhr, i.e. midday prayer, when people are alert after having had some rest. As such, it is similar to the time of Friday prayer which is preceded by a speech. Most important speeches of the Prophet in Madinah were at this time, just after finishing midday prayer.³⁶ The call went out to the people: 'Attend to the prayer.' It was a call to alert the people to something important and that they should come and listen. The place was prepared for the Prophet to deliver his speech. An area between two trees was swept and any sticks or leaves that had fallen were removed. A rug was hung

36 A. al-Turairi, *A Day in the Life of Muhammad*, Chapter: "In the Afternoon".

between the trees to give the Prophet shade, for the day was very hot. Along the trail the people were called, so that those who were ahead came back and the ones lagging behind came forward.

The Prophet led the Zuhr prayer and then stood to give his speech, starting with praising God and glorifying Him. He admonished the people, reminding them of their duties. He then asked: 'Have I delivered my message?' They all said: 'Yes.' He said: 'My Lord, bear witness.' He repeated this three times. He then said:

People, I am only a human being. A messenger from my Lord will soon call on me and I will respond. I am leaving with you two great things. The first is God's book that contains guidance and light. It is the rope God stretches to you. Whoever adheres to it and implements it is well guided. The one who abandons it is in error. Hold on to God's book and adhere to it.

He continued to urge people to implement God's book and keep it alive with them. He then said:

And the people of my household. I remind you of God in dealing with the people of my household. I remind you of God in dealing with the people of my household. I remind you of God in dealing with the people of my household.

He then held Ali's hand and stood him next to him. He said:

Do you know that I have more claim on the believers than they have on their own selves? They said: 'Yes.' He said: Do you know that I have more claim on the believers than they have on their own selves? They said: 'Yes.' He said: Do you know that I have more claim on the believers than they have on their own selves? They said: 'Yes.' He said: Are you not aware that I have more claim on every believer than he has on himself? They said: 'Yes, we bear witness that you have more claim on every believer than he has on himself.' He said: Then learn that whoever owes me allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali. My Lord, support whoever supports Ali and be the enemy of his enemy.³⁷

My Lord! How did Ali feel with those thousands of the Prophet's companions around, but he is the nearest and the closest to him? What did he feel as God's messenger held his hand and raised it in front of all these thousands? How overwhelmed he must have felt as the Prophet said: 'Whoever owes me allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali?'

I try hard to imagine Ali and appreciate his feelings. It is as if he was taken to the Supreme Society; as if the Prophet was lifting him by the hand to take him to high heaven. He looks from above on the world and realizes that in its totality it was beneath the position the Prophet's address gave him.

37 Related by Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 32,118; Ahmad, hadith Nos 18,479, 19,279, 19,265 and 19,325; Muslim, hadith No. 2,408; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 3,713; Ibn Majah, hadith No. 116.

What great energy must have been shown by Ali to experience all these feelings and yet to remain steadfast and not to be overwhelmed by emotion. How come that tears did not pour down on his face? There was the Prophet in whom he believed and the one with whom he was in a relationship of pure and profound love. Yet the Prophet, who says nothing but the truth and what is right, said those great words about him. He must have felt on the high horizon, full of delight at the honour he was given. It was the supreme honour that cannot be excelled. His pride in what the Prophet said could not be surpassed.

Every time I think of this moment in Ali's life and try to imagine his feelings, I feel that it is beyond expression. It is not easy to portray such profound feelings. At such a moment, feelings are too numerous and too deep to be described by mere words. Try to feel them yourself, but then you realize that the best you can do is to say: Peace be to you Abu al-Hasan.³⁸ God has given you a great favour and you are entitled to be greatly pleased with it. 'Say: "In God's bounty and grace, in this let them rejoice; for this is better than all that they may amass." (10: 58) Peace be to you Abu al-Hasan. How happy you are with God's favour and bounty, and with your closeness to the Prophet and being his relative. God says: 'God knows best whom to entrust with His message' (6: 124) and 'Does not God know best as to who is truly grateful?' (6: 53)

³⁸ Abu al-Hasan is Ali's other name, according to the age-old Arab tradition of calling a person as the father of his eldest son, as a gesture of respect.

Then can we imagine the feelings of the Prophet's companions as they listened to him bidding them farewell: 'I am only a human being. A messenger from my Lord will soon call on me and I will respond.' Loving eyes are opened wide and loving hearts are stirred. This is, then, a word of farewell and a last appeal. How will they receive the words of their beloved Prophet at the end of his life?

How did the Prophet's companions feel when they saw Ali in such proximity to the Prophet and in such an honourable position? They heard the clear words defining his rights, and much of the displeasure that they might have felt towards him is thus removed, replaced by new feelings of welcome and love.

This honour was granted to Ali at a time when Islam was the faith of the whole of Arabia, with its whole population having become Muslims. More than 100,000 people joined God's messenger on his pilgrimage. They followed none other than God's messenger and believed in no religion other than his faith.

This was a day when due honour was given to Ali by the Prophet, because Ali hastened to embrace Islam when others were reluctant. He came forward when others stayed behind. Ali embraced Islam when the dawn of Islam was just breaking upon the world. It had neither power nor a large following. He did so when idolatry was the order of the day and the idols were raised all over the place. He became a Muslim when there were only three other Muslims, which meant that on that day he was one-quarter of the Muslim community. His faith in Islam was getting ever stronger. He was ready to come forward

whenever there was risk. His sacrifice was the most generous: he laid down his life and exposed himself to all sorts of danger in support of his faith and to protect the Prophet and his message. He was the first to fight the initial duel at the Battle of Badr,³⁹ the leader of the triumphant attack during the Siege of the Moat,⁴⁰ and the one who made the winning breakthrough at the Battle of Khaybar.⁴¹

The entire event was to honour Ali for his early dedication to Islam, right from its very early days. It was a case of a faithful acknowledgement by the Prophet of Ali's service. The Prophet said: 'To be faithful to others is part of faith.'⁴²

People embraced Islam in large groups, and whole tribes and communities accepted it as their faith, but all these were latecomers while Ali was ahead of them all. God says: 'Those of you who gave and fought [for God's cause] before the victory are not like others: they are higher in rank than those who gave and fought afterwards, although God has promised the ultimate good to all of them.' (57: 10) The event at al-Ghadeer was an acknowledgement of Ali's status, giving him the honour he deserved.

³⁹ As in footnote 10.

⁴⁰ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 2, pp. 224–225; al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 32; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 574; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wal-Nihayah*, vol. 6, pp. 41–43.

⁴¹ Muslim, hadith No. 1,807; and as in note 70.

⁴² Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 1, pp. 15–16; al-Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman*, hadith Nos 9,122–9,123.

THE RESULT

The Prophet's companions received his address with pleasure and acceptance. They learnt it and conveyed it to others. This was manifested in the respect and love they felt towards Ali and they reported his high qualities. The major scholars of *Hadith* said: 'None of the Prophet's companions has been praised for his fine characteristics in as many reports with authentic chains of transmission as Ali.'⁴³

- i. Umar met Ali and congratulated him at his status: 'My sincere congratulations to you, Ali. You are now and every day the one to whom allegiance is due by every believing man and woman.'⁴⁴
- ii. The Prophet's words about Ali lived in their consciousness, manifesting itself in true love. Buraydah, who used to hate Ali, said: 'When God's messenger said these words, no one was dearer to me than Ali.'⁴⁵

⁴³ This was expressed by Imam Ahmad, al-Nassa'i, Justice Isma'eel ibn Ishaq and many others.

⁴⁴ Related by Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 32,118; Ahmad, hadith No. 18,479; Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wal-Nihayah, vol. 11, p. 74.

⁴⁵ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 22,967; al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith No. 8,428.

People said to Umar: ‘You honour Ali in a way that you do not use with anyone else of the Prophet’s companions.’ He said: ‘He is my master.’⁴⁶

A group of the Ansar including Abu Ayyoob al-Ansari went to visit Ali at al-Rahabah. They greeted him saying: ‘Peace be to you, our master.’ He said: ‘How can I be your master when you are Arabs.’ They said: ‘We heard God’s messenger when he said at Ghadeer Khumm: “Whoever owes me allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali.”’⁴⁷

May God be pleased with Abu Bakr. He said: ‘By Him who holds my soul in His hand, I love to extend kind treatment to the Prophet’s relatives ahead of my own relatives.’⁴⁸

When Abu Bakr became the first Caliph, he said as he addressed the people: ‘Do your duty by Muhammad (peace be upon him) through kindness to the members of his household.’⁴⁹ This meant that people should show the Prophet’s relatives their respect and affection and be kind to them.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 235; al-Manawi, *Fayd al-Qadeer*, vol. 6, p. 217. This hadith is suspect with regard to its chain of transmission. Al-Albani enters it in his anthology of hadiths that are lacking in authenticity.

⁴⁷ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 23,563; al-Tabarani, *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabir*, hadith Nos 4,052–4,053.

⁴⁸ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 55; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,712, 4,035 and 4,240; Muslim, hadith No. 1,759.

⁴⁹ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,713 and 3,751; Ahmad, *Fada’il al-Sahabah*, hadith No. 971.

⁵⁰ Ibraheem ibn Yusuf, *Matali‘ al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 181; Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 7, p. 79.

Can a Muslim neglect the rights of the Prophet's relatives and refuse to hold them dear to him when he listens to the Prophet's appeal to all Muslims: 'I remind you of God in your treatment of the members of my household'? Can a Muslim imagine that he does not have a duty of support to Ali when he listens to the Prophet's statement: 'Whoever owes me allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali'? Justice Isma'el ibn Ishaq said: 'Loser indeed is anyone who does not feel to owe allegiance to Ali'.⁵¹

- iii. The Prophet's companions who attended him on this occasion memorized what he said and reported it accurately. When Zayd ibn Arqam was an elderly man, people asked him to relate to them some of what he heard from the Prophet. He apologized, saying that he had forgotten much and he feared that he might not be accurate in his reporting. He said to one who made this request of him: 'My nephew, I have become old and the time since I heard him has been long. I have forgotten some of what I learnt from God's messenger. Whatever I relate to you, take it from me. Do not ask me about what I do not relate.'

Yet his caution and fear of forgetfulness did not include this event. Zayd reported it as though he was looking at the event as it unfolded. He mentioned the place and what was there. He proceeded to report the

51 Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, vol. 13, p. 341.

details of the event, then he mentioned the Prophet's address in full. When he was asked whether he himself heard the Prophet say it, he said: 'Everyone who was at those trees – meaning the trees of Ghadeer Khumm – saw the event with his eyes and heard it with his ears.'⁵²

- iv. The Prophet's companions reported his speech and they testified to its truth when Ali called on them to be his witnesses. Towards the end of his life, Ali called on people to assemble in the main square in Kufah and said: 'I appeal to every Muslim who heard the Prophet's speech on the Ghadeer Khumm occasion to stand up.' Thirty of those who were assembled stood up and testified that the Prophet said to all those who attended him on that day: 'Are you aware that I have more claim on every believer than he has on himself? They said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Then learn that whoever owes me allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali. My Lord, support whoever supports Ali and be the enemy of his enemy.'⁵³

As he addressed the people in the main mosque at Kufah, Ali made an appeal to the Prophet's companions present and who were at Ghadeer Khumm. He said: 'I am appealing by God to any man – and I am addressing this only to the companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him) – who heard God's messenger say on the day of Ghadeer Khumm: "Whoever owes me

⁵² Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 19,265 and 19,279; Muslim, hadith No. 2,408.

⁵³ Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 641, 950, 961 and 19,302; al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith Nos 8,416, 8,424 and 8,430, Ibn Hibban, hadith No. 6,931.

allegiance, owes allegiance to Ali. My Lord, support whoever supports Ali and be the enemy of his enemy," to stand up and testify.' Six people stood up at one side of the platform [i.e. *minbar*] where he was speaking and six on the other side. They all testified that they heard the Prophet say that.⁵⁴

- v. The Prophet's companions who reported the speech at Ghadeer Khumm are numerous. This *hadith* is reported by Ali ibn Abu Talib, Buraydah ibn al-Husayb, Zayd ibn Arqam, Saad ibn Abu Waqqas, Talhah ibn Ubaydullah, Ibn Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, Anas ibn Malik, Abdullah ibn Umar, Jabir ibn Abdullah, Abu Ayyoob al-Ansari, al-Bara' ibn Azib, Hudhayfah ibn Usayd al-Ghifari, Ammar ibn Yasir, Yaala ibn Murrah and others.⁵⁵

This *hadith*, stressing Ali's status, is considered by many scholars to be of the grade of *mutawatir*, which is the highest degree of authenticity. Among these scholars are al-Dhahabi in *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, al-Suyooti in *Qutoof al-Azhaar al-Mutanaathirah fi al-Akhbaar al-Mutawaatirah*, al-Kattani in *Nazm al-Mutanaathir*, al-'Ajlooni in *Kashf al-Khafa'*, al-Albani in *al-Silsilah al-Saheehah*, and many others.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Related by Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith No. 32,091; al-Nassa'i, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, hadith No. 8,419; al-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat, hadith No. 2,254.

⁵⁵ Al-Albani, Al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, hadith No. 1,750; Nabeel ibn Mansoor, Anees al-Sari, vol. 7, pp. 5,266–5,301.

⁵⁶ Al-Dhahbi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, vol. 8, p. 335; al-Suyooti, *Qutoof al-Azhaar al-Mutanaathirah fi al-Akhbaar al-Mutawaatirah*, p. 100; al-Kattani, *Nazm al-Mutanaathir*, p. 232; al-'Ajlooni, *Kashf al-Khafa'*, vol. 2, p. 329; al-Albani, Al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, hadith No. 1,750.

Ibn Hajar describes this *hadith* as ‘having numerous reports and most of its chains of transmission are of the authentic or good degree’.⁵⁷

Some scholars devoted works to this *hadith*, examining its chains of transmission and its reports. Among these are al-Tabari, Ibn Uqdah and al-Dhahabi.⁵⁸

57 Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 7, p. 74.

58 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah*, vol. 7, pp. 319–320; al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, vol. 17, p. 169; al-Kattani, *Al-Risalah al-Mustatrafah*, p. 112.

LOVED AND HONOURED BY EVERY BELIEVER

Mutual support between believers is their strong and permanent bond. Every believer owes support to all believers. God says: ‘The believers, men and women, are allied to one another.’ (9: 71) It is a bond of solidarity, support, friendship and love. However, despite the fact that the bond applies to all believers, the Prophet specifically mentioned Ali in this context. This specific mention of Ali is particularly significant and has a special purpose. The specificity confirms and strengthens this bond. The Prophet’s words mean in effect: Whoever owes allegiance and support to me must also owe allegiance and support to Ali.

This is a great distinction given to Ali. Support may have grades that differ in strength and effect. The same applies to the Prophet’s companions. When someone says, ‘Abu Bakr, the Prophet’s companion,’ he does not mean mere companionship which applied to all the Prophet’s companions. This phrase is meant as: ‘Abu Bakr, the closest person to the Prophet.’

The support that the Muslim community owe to God's messenger is stronger than what they owe to one another and the Prophet assigned a similarly strong bond of loyalty and support to Ali. Had he not intended this to be the case his words would not have given Ali any favour and would not have signified anything special, because all believers owe one another mutual support. Therefore, in this context the Prophet's mention of Ali in particular confirms, strengthens and elevates the bond of support that is owed to him.

Moreover, the specific mention of Ali, in addition to the general mutual support between believers, gives him a special honour. A similar example is seen in the Qur'anic verse that says to the believers: 'Attend regularly to your prayers, and the middle prayer.' (2: 238) The middle prayer is specifically mentioned, although it is included in the first statement, 'Attend regularly to your prayers,' which means that it has a special status of distinction.

Another example is God's mention of Gabriel and Michael within the general reference to the angels. He says: 'Whoever is an enemy of God, His angels, His messengers, and to Gabriel and Michael will surely find that God is indeed the enemy of the unbelievers.' (2: 98) Gabriel and Michael are angels like the rest of angels, but they are mentioned here by name to give them a special honourable status. The same applies to Ali, as he is specifically mentioned in the context of the support owed to him by all believers.

Ali is specifically mentioned because of his purity, exemplary conduct, firm belief, early acceptance of Islam, continuous efforts of jihad, closeness to the Prophet and his relationship with him. All these qualities give him special honour both in this life and in the life to come.

That the Prophet mentions Ali in particular, despite the fact that support is mutually owed to one another by all Muslims, serves as a testimonial by one described by God as one who ‘does not speak out of his own fancy.’ (53: 3) What he delivers ‘is nothing less than a revelation sent down to him.’ (53: 4) This testimonial confirms that Ali was a genuine believer and that he deserves support in public and private. As Muslims we owe support to everyone who claims to be a believer, but we leave their inner thoughts to be judged by God. Therefore, when the Prophet states that Ali deserves support, he actually declares him a true believer, so that people should know that he was the same in public and private. Therefore, he deserves this special support. This is certainly a true honour.

The same may be said about the Prophet’s other statement concerning Ali: ‘He loves God and His messenger and is loved by God and His messenger.’⁵⁹ This is a confirmation of Ali’s genuine, true and sincere love of God and His messenger. The evidence for that is the fact that they both love Ali.

The support owed to Ali continues for all time. It applied to Ali during the Prophet’s lifetime and his own lifetime, as well as after they had both passed away. Therefore, we are proud to

59 As in footnote 4.

say that we, our ancestors and offspring, as well as every believer, man and woman, owe allegiance to Ali until the Day of Judgement. None disowns this binding support except a loser; none hates Ali except a hypocrite. No believer denies his high status; no scholar overlooks his early dedication to Islam, his closeness to the Prophet and his service to Islam. Loser indeed is anyone who does not feel to owe support to Ali.⁶⁰

May God be pleased with our master, Ali, and grant him His grace and blessings, and may He give the same to his wife, Fati-mah al-Zahra', the first lady of mankind, and to their offspring in all generations. To them all a goodly and blessed greeting.

May God's mercy and blessings be on you, people of this house. He is indeed ever to be praised, glorious.

May God also bestow His mercy on us, as we love them for His sake.

60 Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'weel Mukhtalaf al-Hadith*, pp. 92–93; Makki ibn Abu Talib, *Al-Hidayah ila Buloogh al-Nihayah*, vol. 4, p. 2,985; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-Maseer*, vol. 1, p. 91.

A DIFFERENT VERSION

The Imamiyyah Shia give a different version of al-Ghadeer *hadith*. They give this other version in several forms that differ in length and detail. In *Al-Ihtijaj*, by Ahmad ibn Ali al-Tubrusi, the Prophet's speech takes no less than eleven pages.⁶¹

The Shia reports are all in agreement that the speech included the appointment of Ali as the Prophet's successor and leader of the Muslim community, and that was final. They allege that God revealed this to His messenger (peace be upon him) and commanded him to announce it. However, the Prophet feared that the people might disagree and reject Ali. Therefore, God revealed to him the verse that says: 'Messenger, proclaim what has been revealed to you by your Lord. For, unless you do it fully, you will not have delivered His message. God will protect you from all men. God does not guide those who reject faith.' (5: 67) Upon receiving this revelation, the Prophet addressed the people at al-Ghadeer, held Ali's hand and said: 'Ali ibn Abu Talib is my brother, successor and the leader [i.e. Imam] after me ... Listen and obey ... '⁶²

61 Ahmad ibn Ali al-Tubrusi, *Al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, pp. 55–66.

62 Al-Ameeni, *al-Ghadeer*, vol. 1, p. 215.

The Shia's version also claims that the Prophet's companions who were with him pledged themselves to this, including Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, the Muhajireen, the Ansar and the rest of those who were with the Prophet. With this announcement and the settlement of succession, the religion of Islam became complete and God revealed the verse that says: 'This day I have perfected your religion for you and have bestowed on you the full measure of My blessings and have chosen Islam as a religion for you.' (5: 3)

This version also mentions the large number of the Prophet's companions that attended the pledge of loyalty to Ali, said to be 70,000 and more. They included the Muhajireen and Ansar, the members of the Prophet's household, his wives and the people of the tribes that lived in the vicinity of Madinah.

Yet this commitment was undone on the day the Prophet passed away, just eighty-four days after it was made. Ali's right to be the Prophet's successor was usurped and the Prophet's will ignored. Instead the Prophet was succeeded by three of his companions ahead of Ali, despite that all three had pledged their loyalty to him. Yet Ali, for whom the pledge was made, pledged his loyalty to all three and became a minister to every one of them.

A very large number of books were written about the events surrounding Ali and al-Ghadeer according to the Shia. One of these, *Al-Ghadeer fi al-Kitab wal-Sunnah wal-Adab*, [i.e. Al-Ghadeer in the Qur'an, the Sunnah and Literature], by Abd al-Husayn Ahmad al-Ameeni al-Najafi, (died 1390 AH, 1971) comprised ten volumes. This is perhaps the largest book devoted to the story of al-Ghadeer along the lines reported by the Shia.

THE SHIA'S REPORT EXAMINED

The Shia's report describes what took place at Ghadeer Khumm, regarding the appointment of Ali as the Imam to succeed the Prophet, and that a pledge was taken from the Muslim community to honour this appointment. It was a covenant that was confirmed and solemnized and became part of the faith and a covenant to which the Muslim community committed themselves: pledging loyalty to Ali in front of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

We are told that only eighty-four days later, all those who attended, witnessed, pledged and committed themselves went back on their commitment, discarded their pledge and altered the Prophet's express orders. Hence, in order to arrive at the truth, this requires us to undertake a thorough research and examination of what we are told. We need to do this in order to learn the exact will made by our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), carry out his orders and fulfil the pledges made to him. We will look at the evidence provided by the historical events and proofs arrived at by logical reasoning. We must look at these and contemplate their significance,

so that we are true to the dictates of both heart and mind, and we will thus be able to get as close as possible to the historical truth. This was explained well by Ibn Khaldoon in a marvellous chapter of his priceless *Al-Muqaddimah*, advocating the need to apply logical reasoning to historical reports.⁶³ The pointers that draw the attention of historians and analysts and cannot be ignored include the following:

1. Can it be imagined that the multitudes that gathered around the Prophet could agree to suppress and discard this pledge, even though they belonged to different tribes and lived in different areas? A secret that is known to more than two people will not remain a secret. Yet here was an appeal by the Prophet, made in a public speech with the people called to come forward and listen. The call was made in a way that signalled an important event. The Prophet made his message plain and clearly explained what he required. The people who listened and witnessed then dispersed, with groups going to their respective areas and tribes. How come, then, that the news did not get more publicized? How come that those who attended and listened did not object to the turn of events if it was in clear violation of the pledges given to the Prophet? How is it possible that no one objected when Abu Bakr was chosen as the Prophet's successor, or that the tribes living around Madinah did not turn up to seek clarification or make objections? All this suggests that there was nothing to be clarified or to be objected to.

63 Ibn Khaldoon, *Al-Muqaddimah*, Arabic edition, vol. 1, p. 13.

2. During his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet delivered major speeches on the Day of Arafat, 9 Dhul-Hijjah, and on the Day of Sacrifice, 10 Dhul-Hijjah, and on the following day in Mina, when he was on his mount and Ali held its rein. In all these speeches, he explained the principles of the Islamic faith and the main issues of the divine law.⁶⁴ A week later, he addressed the people travelling with him on the way back to Madinah. Most tribes had already dispersed, each going to their own quarters, so those who performed the pilgrimage with him were on their way to their respective places. As Ibn Abbas said: ‘The people headed from Mina to their respective areas.’⁶⁵ The people of Makkah remained there; the people of Taif went to Taif, and the people of Najd headed to Najd. Those who travelled with the Prophet from Makkah were the people of Madinah and those whose quarters were on his way.

Had the question of Ali’s succession been of such importance in Islam, the Prophet would have stated it at one of those great scenes during the pilgrimage. He would have stressed it in his three earlier speeches, particularly because he was bidding farewell to the people, stating: ‘Perhaps I will not meet you again after this year.’⁶⁶ Alternatively, he would have repeated it when he was back in Madinah, especially during his

⁶⁴ A. al-Turairi, On pilgrimage.. in the Prophet’s Company.

⁶⁵ As in footnote 29.

⁶⁶ As in footnote 28.

last illness. He realized that his illness was terminal, as he informed his daughter Fatimah.⁶⁷

In the early days of his illness, the Prophet came outside with a bandage on his head. He sat on the platform and sought to prepare his companions for his imminent departure. He stressed that whoever will succeed him should take care of the Ansar. He ordered that every entrance to the mosque should be sealed with the exception of Abu Bakr's, and every door should be closed except Ali's.⁶⁸

Had the Prophet appointed his successor, or intended that someone in particular should succeed him, he would have surely given this more importance than the reference to Abu Bakr's entrance to the mosque and Ali's door. Indeed this was the time and place for it. Moreover, why did he not mention this in the last congregational prayer he led, when he felt that the pain had subsided? On that occasion, he came outside supported on both sides by Ali and al-Abbas. His feet dragged on the ground until they sat him next to Abu Bakr. He led the prayer sitting down. When he finished, Ali and al-Abbas supported him to take him home in the same way.⁶⁹ This was certainly the time to nominate his

67 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 24,483 and 26,413; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,623–3,626; Muslim, hadith No. 2,450.

68 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 1,511, 2,432 and 3,061; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 467, 3,628 and 3,800; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 3,732.

69 Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 198, 712, 713, 664, 665 and 687; Muslim, hadith No. 418.

successor in the first place, or to reaffirm his appointment if he had made it previously. Ali was with him, supporting him as he was hardly able to walk.

We also have the report from Abdullah ibn Abbas that during the Prophet's last illness, as Ali and his uncle, al-Abbas, came out of the Prophet's home, people asked [Ali: 'How is God's messenger this morning, Abu Hasan?'] He replied: 'All praise be to God; he is recovering.' Al-Abbas took Ali by the hand and said to him: 'By God, I think that God's messenger (peace be upon him) will die as a result of his present illness. I can recognize the approach of death on the face of any of Abd al-Muttalib's descendants. Let us go back to God's messenger (peace be upon him) and ask him who will be his successor? If it will be one of us, we will know that. If it will be someone else, we will also know it and he may put in a good word with him for us.' Ali replied: 'By God, if we ask God's messenger (peace be upon him) to give us such authority and he refuses, people will never give it to us. I shall never request that of God's messenger (peace be upon him).'

Had the Prophet appointed Ali as his successor, why would al-Abbas suggest to Ali that they ask him that very question? Al-Abbas was at Ghadeer Khumm and he heard the Prophet make his speech. Moreover, Ali's response confirms that there was no such appointment. Had there been, he would have reminded al-Abbas that

the appointment had been made at Ghadeer Khumm, and that was all that was required.

All this suggests that when he urged that people should take care of his family members he intended this to mean those who were close to his family and who mixed socially with them. These were the Muhajireen, Ansar and the tribes living close to Madinah; the ones travelling with him. He wanted them to love, respect and honour his family, remembering God's messenger when they dealt with them. It was by no means intended as suggesting a successor.

3. Is it conceivable that the Prophet could have nominated Ali as his successor, then appoint Abu Bakr to lead the prayer when he fell ill?⁷⁰ The one who had the rightful claim to leading the prayer in the Prophet's mosque was his successor, if there was anyone named as such. The fact that someone else was instructed to lead the prayer confirms that there was no such nomination or appointment. It is inconceivable that a person is nominated to be the overall Imam, or ruler, and not to be given the lesser task of leading the prayer.

Ali said: 'Your Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet of mercy, was neither killed nor died suddenly. He was ill for several days and nights. The person calling the prayer would go to him to inform him that the

70 Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 664, 679 and 713; Muslim, hadith No. 418.

prayer was due, and he ordered Abu Bakr to lead the prayer. He saw me wherever I happened to be. When God's messenger was gathered to his Lord, we considered our affairs. We chose for our leader in our worldly affairs the person the Prophet chose to lead us in our religious affairs.⁷¹

4. The Ansar held a meeting at al-Saqeefah, their usual meeting place, on the same day the Prophet passed away, and the purpose of that meeting was to choose a leader from among themselves. They felt that as they were the indigenous people of Madinah, the capital of the Muslim state, and its rulers before the Prophet's migration there, they were right to reclaim their role as rulers. Had they been committed to a pledge they had given to the Prophet, accepting Ali as his successor, could they have held such a meeting with this particular purpose?

Abu Bakr and Umar joined them in their meeting and some of them proposed a compromise, suggesting that there should be two leaders, one from the Muhajireen and one from the Ansar.⁷² Had there been an order by the Prophet, which they witnessed and to which they committed themselves in his presence, could such a suggestion have been made?

71 Al-Ajiri, *Al-Shari‘ah*, vol. 4, pp. 1,712, 1,723 and 2,337; Ibn Bishran, *Al-Amali*, p. 512.

72 Abd al-Razzaq, *Al-Musannaf*, hadith No. 9,758; Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 2, p. 660; Ahmad, hadith Nos 133 and 391; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,667–3,670.

We believe, without any doubt or hesitation, that had Ali been nominated the Ansar would not have met at al-Saqeefah. They would have met Ali in the mosque, pledging their loyalty to him and giving him the same pledge of support as they had given to the Prophet. They were always men of honour, true to their commitment. Since they did not do that, we know that there was no such pledge or commitment.

5. Ali was the most courageous of people, with a very strong character. Had the Prophet appointed him as his successor and taken a pledge from the people to that effect, and had the people committed themselves to it, what could have prevented him from standing up and calling on people to support him, appealing to them to honour their pledges to the Prophet? Had the Prophet agreed any covenant with the people, what could have stopped Ali from fighting for it, laying down his life for its fulfilment?

Could it be the fear of death? Every time there was a risky task, Ali was the one to come forward and take the risk while others preferred safety. On the day of the Prophet's migration, when the unbelievers were intent on assassinating him, Ali slept in the Prophet's bed. That was a night when the would-be assassins were surrounding the Prophet's home and they could have killed him at any moment.⁷³ He was the first to fight a

73 Abd al-Razzaq, Al-Musannaf, hadith No. 9,743; Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, pp. 482–483; Ahmad, hadith No. 3,061; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwwah, vol. 2, pp. 465–470.

duel just before the Battle of Badr, and was the first to start the Battle of Uhud, felling the flag of the unbelievers. During the siege of Madinah and the Encounter of the Moat, Ali was the one to fight and kill Amr ibn Abd Wudd, who was reputed to be the bravest and hardest fighter in Arabia. He was the one to make the advance in the Battle of Khaybar, fighting and killing Marhab before storming the fort that put up extreme resistance.⁷⁴

Ali could never be sorry for anything more than missing a battle alongside the Prophet, defending him. When the Prophet went on the Expedition of Tabuk, which was intended to fight the Byzantines, he left Ali as his deputy in Madinah. Ali asked the Prophet: ‘Are you leaving me here to attend to the women and children?’ The Prophet said to him: ‘Are you not happy to be to me like Aaron was to Moses?’⁷⁵

Is it logical to suppose that such a courageous fighter would suddenly forget all his bravery as he saw the pledge given to the Prophet concerning him violated and discarded and the instructions the Prophet gave left undone? How come that strong and brave as he was Ali did not take a strong and brave attitude? Far be it for Ali to allow any right to be trampled upon. His great-grandson, Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan said: ‘Who can allege that Ali was forced into

74 Muslim, hadith No. 1,807; al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwah*, vol. 4, p. 214.

75 As in footnote 2.

submission, and that God's messenger gave him some orders and he did not put them into effect? It is worse than disrespectful of Ali to allege that God's messenger (peace be upon him) gave him an order and he stopped short of carrying it out.⁷⁶

In reference the pledge of loyalty Ali gave to Abu Bakr, Shaikh Ali al-Tantawi wrote: 'How did Ali give his pledge? Was it out of choice or by coercion? To claim that it was by coercion is false. Ali was too honourable to do anything under duress. He remained six months before he gave that pledge, and no one took issue with him over this point. If he gave his pledge of loyalty by free choice, was he aware that the man to whom he pledged loyalty was suitable to be the Prophet's successor? Did he believe that giving his pledge was something he was doing for God's sake, or he did so in order to secure some immediate gains? Ali was too God-fearing to pledge loyalty to anyone unless he was certain that he was suitable for the post and well worthy of leading the Muslim community.'⁷⁷

6. A number of the Prophet's companions objected to Abu Bakr's decision to fight the apostates who rebelled against the state, then they agreed with him.⁷⁸ Some of

76 Al-Daraqutni, *Fada'il al-Sahabah*, p. 40; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-I'tiqad*, p. 355; Abu al-Qasim al-Asbahani, *Al-Hujjah fi Bayan al-Mahajjah*, vol. 2, pp. 377–378.

77 A. al-Tantawi, *Dhikrayat*, vol. 3, pp. 386–388. [The quotation is a summary of what the author said].

78 Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 1,399, 1,400 and 6,924–6,925; Muslim, hadith No. 20.

them objected to Umar when he decided not to divide the land of Iraq as war gains.⁷⁹ Ali objected to Uthman with regard to the method of the pilgrimage.⁸⁰

Since they were ready to object to the Caliph's decisions, stating their grounds for such objections, would they not have done the same concerning the far more important issue of the Prophet's succession when they had solid grounds for such an objection, namely the pledge they gave to the Prophet and the covenant he took for Ali. Had there been any such pledge or covenant, they would have expressed their disagreement very strongly and they would have remained true to their commitment.

7. When Umar realized that he was dying, after he had been stabbed, he appointed six of the most senior companions of the Prophet, including Ali and Uthman, to choose his successor from among themselves. One of the six, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, carried out a survey over three full days, asking people whether they preferred Ali or Uthman to succeed Umar. The fact that Ali accepted to be one of the six candidates proves that there was no instruction or nomination by the Prophet regarding his succession. Had Ali been nominated by the Prophet, he would have reminded the people of

⁷⁹ Abu Yusuf, Al-Kharaj, pp. 36–37 and 45–46; al-Qasim ibn Sallam, Al-Amwal, p. 147; Ahmad, Fada'il al-Sahabah, p. 378.

⁸⁰ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith No. 1,563; Muslim, hadith No. 1,223.

it at this stage.⁸¹ Had the Prophet appointed Ali as his successor, the people of Madinah would have said to Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf when he sought their views: how can you consult us when the Prophet has already made his choice of Ali and took from us a pledge of loyalty to him?

8. The Qur'an includes several verses that commend the Prophet's companions and highlight their qualities. It is God who has stated their praise so that it will remain known to all future generations. Can there be any greater praise of the Prophet's companions than what God says about those who offered the al-Ridwan pledge to the Prophet: 'God was indeed well pleased with the believers when they pledged their allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts and so He sent down tranquillity upon them, and rewarded them with a speedy victory.' (48: 18)

There were 1,400 of the Prophet's companions who went with him to perform the umrah in Makkah, but the Quraysh did not allow them entry. The Prophet sent Uthman to them to negotiate, but then news came to the Prophet that the Quraysh killed Uthman. The Prophet took a pledge from his companions, which became known as al-Ridwan pledge, to fight to the finish and they all gave him this pledge.

81 Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 1,392 and 3,700.

In this verse God does not commend what they did or said, but He commends what is unknown to anyone other than Him. It is He alone who knows peoples inner thoughts and their intentions. Hence, He says: ‘He knew what was in their hearts and so He sent down tranquillity upon them.’ God also commends the Anṣar in many verses, such as the following verse which refers to them as the ones already firmly established in the Home [i.e. Madinah] and in faith [i.e. Islam]: ‘And to those who were already firmly established in the Home and in faith, those who love the ones that seek refuge with them and harbour no desire in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given. They give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. Those who are saved from their own greed are truly successful.’ (59: 9)

Where were these companions of the Prophet commended by God Himself, whether numerous or few? What was their attitude to the instructions, covenant and pledge the Prophet organized, if any? Could there have been with the Prophet people God describes in these terms and yet they would choose not to be true to their commitment to the Prophet? Among the best that I have read in this connection is: ‘God has described the Prophet’s companions and commended them in the Qur’ān: if they were real people, then who were they? If they were not, then such description is meaningless, and this cannot be said of God’s words.’

9. Abu Bakr appointed Umar as his successor. Having consulted the most senior of the Prophet's companions he dictated this during his final illness, when he realized that death was very close. When what he dictated was read out to the people, they all agreed and abided by it. There was no dispute about Umar's appointment.⁸²

How come that people should honour Abu Bakr's recommendation, which was read out to them only after his death, while they would not honour a commitment they are said to have given to the Prophet during his lifetime? It is claimed that the Prophet took a solemn pledge from them and made them witnesses to Ali's appointment!

Whatever honour Abu Bakr achieved was through his belief in Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companionship and loyalty to him. Is it possible that people would be true to Abu Bakr more than they were true to the Prophet?

10. Had there been an appointment of Ali as successor to the Prophet and some of the Quraysh clans had gone against it, disputing his right, the Ansar were in Madinah, a neutral party as they did not belong to the Quraysh. The Ansar had pledged their loyalty to the Prophet and committed themselves to protect him. They honoured their pledges when the rest of Arabia

82 Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 259; Ibn Abi Shaybah, hadith Nos 32,040 and 37,057; Ibn Saad, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 3, p. 183.

were united against them, fighting them time after time, and many of them were killed fighting against his enemies. They deserved God's commendation as He says: 'And to those who were already firmly established in the Home and in faith, those who love the ones that seek refuge with them and harbour no desire in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given. They give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. Those who are saved from their own greed are truly successful.' (59: 9) Is it conceivable that these very people would go back on their commitment and pledges, accepting a ruler he had not nominated in preference to his nominee?

They honoured their first pledge to the Prophet, protecting and defending him as they defended their own families.⁸³ They were always true to their commitment and God made His religion prevail through them. Is it conceivable that when they were in Madinah, their hometown where they were the majority, they would abandon his instructions and discard their new commitment, preferring instead a ruler other than the one he appointed? They were not small in number to suggest that they were forced into submission.

Moreover, Ali was close to the Ansar and they were closer to him than to others from the Muhajireen. According to the traditions of the tribal society of

⁸³ Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 14,457 and 14,653; Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, p. 442; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwwah, vol. 2, p. 447.

Arabia they were his maternal uncles, as they were the maternal uncles of his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. In pre-Islamic days, their fathers went to Makkah to give support to Abd al-Muttalib when his uncle Nawfal usurped his rights, taking away his property. Abd al-Muttalib sent word to al-Khzraj, his maternal uncles, requesting their support. They came over from Madinah, encamped at al-Abtah and restored Abd al-Muttalib's rights. This was documented by the poet, Shammar ibn Uwaymir al-Kinani.⁸⁴

Now that they were Muslims, they would have been expected to give greater support to his grandson Ali, as he was also their maternal nephew. The Prophet said: 'People's maternal nephew belongs to them.'⁸⁵ They would not have relinquished Ali's right to Abu Bakr or anyone else, had they realized that he had a right and needed support to secure it.

11. The people accepted Abu Bakr as their ruler and they pledged loyalty to him. The case of Saad ibn Ubadah (may God be pleased with him), who did not do so, became well known. It is reported that Abu Bakr sent Saad a message to the effect: 'Come over and give your pledge. All people have given their pledges, including

⁸⁴ Al-Buladhari, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, vol. 1, p. 70; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 249. Al-Khzraj and al-Aws are the names of the two major tribes living in Madinah who became the Ansar.

⁸⁵ Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 12,187, 13,574 and 19,541; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,528 and 6,762; Muslim, hadith No. 1,059.

your own tribe.' He replied: 'No. By God, I shall not give a pledge of loyalty.' Basheer ibn Saad said to Abu Bakr: 'He has been stubborn in his refusal. Do not disturb him, as matters have been well settled for you. If you leave him alone, he remains one without support.' Abu Bakr accepted this advice and left Saad alone. He remained in Madinah, a noble man and the master of his own tribe. When Abu Bakr passed away and Umar succeeded him, Saad did not pledge loyalty to him also. One day they met and Saad said to Umar: 'This business [of the Caliphate] has come to you. We loved your friend [i.e. Abu Bakr] better than you.'⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Saad remained the leader of al-Khazraj, well respected and honoured. He retained his status, even though he did not pledge loyalty to the first two Caliphs.

We need to look at Saad's attitude from two points: First, Saad declined to give a pledge to Abu Bakr and Umar but he did not make his stand on the basis that the ruler should be Ali. Had he thought so, he would have declared this and all the Ansar would have followed him. Saad (may God be pleased with him) was the proud chief of his people and felt that he should not give such a pledge. His attitude was based on his view that he and his people should have certain rights and that they should be partners in government. Secondly, Saad made his attitude known to all people. Had Ali been appointed by the Prophet to succeed him, having

86 Ibn Saad, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 3, p. 569 and vol. 9, p. 394; Ibn Asakir, Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 20, p. 265; Ibn al-Atheer, Usd al-Ghabah, vol. 3, p. 329.

the Prophet's covenant with the people, could he have not done the same as Saad?

Neither Abu Bakr nor Umar took any measure against Saad for not giving them his pledge of loyalty. Would they have taken any measure against Ali if he took the same attitude? Ali had a higher status, commanded more respect and was more courageous and outspoken than Saad. Had any covenant been solemnized by the Prophet in his favour, would he not have pressed his claim openly and courageously?

12. Abu Bakr did not belong to one of the more distinguished clans of the Quraysh which enjoyed power and influence. He belonged to the Taym clan which did not have any of the institutions that gave a status of honour to their holders, such as the provision of food or drinking water to pilgrims, the custody of the Kaabah, the holding of the flag in battle, the storage of arms or the guardianship of al-Nadwah where the Quraysh elders met to consider policy and action in times of need.⁸⁷

Had Abu Bakr belonged to the Makhzoom or Abd al-Dar clans, which competed for honour, we might have said that he marshalled the power and influence of his clan in order to take the position of Caliph away from the Hadhimites. In the past, Abu Jahl, who belonged to Makhzoom, envied the Prophet his status as God's

⁸⁷ Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, vol. 1, pp. 129–132; al-Azraqi, *Akhbar Makkah*, vol. 1, p. 110; al-Fakihi, *Akhbar Makkah*, vol. 5, p. 158.

messenger because the Prophet belonged to the Abd Manaf clan and the Makhzoom did not want them to have the honour of prophethood for themselves. Abu Bakr had no such power of clan; his power depended on consultation between Muslims, their choice and a voluntary pledge of loyalty.

The same was the case with Umar. He did not belong to any of the more powerful clans of the Quraysh. During the standoff between the Quraysh and the Muslims at the time of al-Hudaybiyah, the Prophet wanted to send him to negotiate with the Quraysh in Makkah, but he apologized and said to the Prophet: ‘Messenger of God, there is none from the Adiy clan in Makkah who can protect me.’⁸⁸

Neither of the two first Caliphs belonged to the clans that competed with the Hashimites, so as to deny the claim that they usurped the right of government, nor did they belong to the more numerically powerful clans, so as to suggest that they managed to usurp it by force. It was all done through consultation among Muslims and their free choice.

13. During the Encounter of the Moat, the Muslims who stood firm with the Prophet faced very hard times. They suffered from cold, hunger, exhaustion and fear. God describes their situation in clear terms: ‘They

⁸⁸ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 18,910; Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 2, p. 315; Ibn Saad, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 5, p. 189.

came upon you from above and from below you. Your eyes rolled [with fear] and your hearts leapt up to your throats, and confused thoughts about God passed through your minds. That was a situation when the believers were sorely tested and severely shaken.' (33: 10–11) This is the only instance where God describes a hard situation in this life in terms akin to those He uses to describe the hardship people face in the life to come: 'Warn them of the Day that is ever drawing near, when people's hearts will chokingly come up to the throats ... '⁸⁹ (40: 18)

We can imagine the situation the Prophet's companions suffered during the siege: they were hungry, with little food to go round, thinly-clad during very cold days, exhausted after digging the long moat, worried that the enemy, which heavily outnumbered them, could attack from the front at any time while the Jews, their former allies, had joined the enemy and were preparing to attack them from the rear. On top of all this, the hypocrites were trying to undermine them, making their feelings clear as they said: 'God and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusions.' (33: 12) That was a situation that severely tested the resolve of even the most powerful of people.

Those who migrated with God's messenger from Makkah did not entertain any doubt as to the truth of their

⁸⁹ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith No. 2,834; Muslim, hadith No. 1,788; al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan*, vol. 3, p. 636.

cause. Had there been any doubt in their minds at the time of this severe trial, they could have easily jumped over the moat and rejoined their own idolater clans. Abu Bakr could have joined the Taym clan, Umar the Adiy clan and Uthman could have gone to his cousin, Abu Sufyan, the commander of the idolaters' army. They could have told them that they were with Muhammad but now they knew better and wanted to rejoin their own people. Had they done this, they would have been warmly welcomed by their clans and all their properties would have been restored to them.

However, every one of them would have preferred to burn to ashes rather than entertain any such thought, let alone consider it as an option. When the test was at its most severe, they only thought and said what God has reported in the Qur'an: 'When the believers saw the Confederate forces they said: "This is what God and His Messenger have promised us! Truly spoke God and His Messenger." This only served to strengthen their faith and their submission to God.' (33: 22) Do we, on our part, think that those who remained steadfast with the Prophet during this severe test would discard their pledges to him after his death?

14. In the Battle of Uhud, when the Muslims suffered a military defeat, a rumour circulated that the Prophet had been killed. The Muslims were severely demoralized and they were scattered on the mountain path, or on the mountain. Some of them, including Uthman ibn Affan

(may God be pleased with him), left the battlefield.⁹⁰ Yet where did they go? They went to Madinah to join the Muslims that were there. They wanted to be with those who believed in him and to be where his mosque and home were.

It was easy for Uthman to rejoin the idolaters, especially considering that their commander was his cousin, Abu Sufyan. Had he gone to Abu Sufyan, the latter would have received him most warmly. The same applied to others among the Muhajireen, as each one of them had his own clan and family among the idolater army and they would have been protected. Yet such a thought was not entertained by a single one of them, even though they thought that the Prophet was dead. They realized that his faith survived and they held on to it.

Qur'anic revelations mentioned the fact that they fled, but followed that with the good news that God had forgiven them: 'As for those of you who turned away on the day when the two hosts met in battle, Satan caused them to slip only in consequence of something that they themselves had done. But now God has pardoned them. Indeed, God is much forgiving, forbearing.' (3: 155) They left the battlefield, but they did not abandon their faith in this moment of severe trial and hardship.

90 Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,698 and 4,066.

Does anyone think that after his death those very people could abandon their faith and discard the covenant they gave the Prophet? They held on to his faith when the news that he had been killed circulated among them and when his army was defeated. None of them thought of abandoning the Islamic message, even though they thought the messenger himself was no longer there and they were fleeing from the battlefield. Such people who could remain steadfast in their faith would never abandon it under any circumstances.

15. When Uthman was besieged in his home, he appealed to the people on the grounds of his service to Islam in its early days and reminded them of what the Prophet said to him. He mentioned the time when the Prophet gave instructions to the Muslims to prepare for an expedition to fight the Byzantines. This was at a time of hardship in Madinah with people having few resources. That army came to be known ‘the army of hardship’, and the Prophet appealed for donations. Uthman said to them: ‘I remind you by God: at the time when the army of hardship was being mobilized the Prophet said: “Who will give a donation and it will be accepted”. Do you know that I equipped that army?’ They said: ‘Yes.’ Uthman then said: ‘I remind you by God: Do you know that no one could have a drink of water from the Roomah Well except for a price, and I bought it, making it free for the rich and the poor and

all passers-by?' They said: 'Yes.' He mentioned other things he had done.⁹¹

If Uthman could appeal for something like the Roomah Well, Ali could certainly have appealed to the Muslims to honour the pledges they gave to the Prophet, making him his successor, when any such pledges were supposed to have been given in front of a great number of people. Yet he made no such appeal.

16. There are many outstanding instances of the Prophet's companions declaring themselves in support of the truth over many other considerations. One such example is the case of Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah ibn Rabeeah, who took part in the Battle of Badr and saw his father, uncle and brother being killed by the Muslims. He then saw his father's body being dragged and buried in a well at Badr, a sight that could have shaken even the strongest of people. Yet the Prophet's companions were much stronger in support of the truth that shone in their hearts when they accepted Islam. As Abu Hudhayfah saw his father's body being dragged into the well, he looked upset. The Prophet said to him: 'Abu Hudhayfah, you may be upset at what has happened to your father.' Abu Hudhayfah replied: 'Messenger of God, it is not that I have any doubt about my belief in God and His messenger. However, there was none among those people who

⁹¹ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 511; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 3,699; Ibn Khuzaymah, hadith Nos 2,487 and 2,491; al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, vol. 1, p. 419.

could come close to Utbah in his wisdom and high status. I had hoped that God, the Mighty and Exalted, would guide him to believe in Islam. When I saw him killed, I was sorry for him.⁹²

Is it conceivable that people of such calibre, who prefer the truth they believed in to their own parents and beloved family members, could have abandoned a right declared by the Prophet and discarded a commitment made to him for the sake of Abu Bakr or anyone else? Definitely not. Had there been any instructions by the Prophet, or a covenant or commitment made, they would not have suppressed it in any way. They would have declared the truth of the matter, because they were the best and most courageous of people in their support of the truth.

17. When the Prophet passed away, many people abandoned Islam, became apostates and fought Abu Bakr.⁹³ One of the reasons for their going to war against him was their objection to paying zakat, or to the choice of Abu Bakr as ruler since they wanted to be the rulers.⁹⁴ Yet no one said to Abu Bakr that the Muslims had given the Prophet a commitment to accept Ali as his successor, so we are going to fight you until he replaces you as a ruler. Had there been any commitment to Ali,

⁹² Al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, vol. 1, pp. 111–112; al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 224.

⁹³ As in note 74.

⁹⁴ Al-Shafi'i, *Al-Umm*, vol. 4, p. 228; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol. 3, p. 246.

this would have been their strongest argument and justification for their rebellion against Abu Bakr.

18. The Haneefah tribe fought with Musaylamah because he belonged to them, even though they knew very well that he was a liar. The Asad tribe supported Tulayyah, their man, and fought alongside him, while the Tameem tribe fought with Sajah, their woman. All these were liars, claiming to be prophets. Is it conceivable that Ali had the right to be ruler and yet he could not find supporters to fight for his cause, when he was a man of truth and pure of heart?
19. The Prophet's companions reported the details of the Prophet's life very accurately. Thus, we know the places where he stopped, the routes he took, the pillar he prayed behind, etc. They described his speech and how he looked when standing or sitting; how he walked; how he slept, and indeed his breathing when asleep; the movement of his beard when he prayed, etc. They accurately reported his statements. What is authentically reported of Prophet Muhammad is the largest that was ever reported of any prophet. Is it conceivable, then, that he would appoint a successor and take the peoples commitment to honour his appointment, then all this be suppressed?
20. The Prophet's companions belonged to various tribes and a multitude of clans, all with different alliances. The only bond that united them and brought them

together was their faith and their love of the Prophet (peace be upon him). If we assume that some of them took a position of appeasement to Abu Bakr, or suppressed what they knew, how about the others who would not have upheld anything other than the right? If a tribe were treacherous, how about other tribes? If a city took a course of appeasement, would all cities take the same course?

21. The people of al-Suffah were people who migrated to join God's messenger, abandoning their own homes and clans. They opted to join the Prophet despite the life of extreme poverty and hunger that they had to endure. They had no reason to migrate except to be with God's messenger and to listen to him as he explained his message and provided guidance. Who could force them to suppress a commitment they gave to God's messenger and called on them and other people to witness it?
22. When Ali was presented with the Caliphate he did not desire such a position. He did not seek it, but it came to him and he did not rejoice and show any delight. He said: 'Leave me alone, and seek someone else to appoint.'⁹⁵ How come he did not say to the people: Yes, this is what God's messenger committed you to do? When he sought to be relieved, why did they not say to him: You have been nominated by the Prophet and

⁹⁵ Al-Tabari, Tarikh, vol. 4, p. 434; Ibn al-Atheer, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, vol. 2, p. 556; al-Shareef al-Radi, Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 7, p. 23.

we will not seek anyone other than you? We will fulfil what the Prophet urged us to do.

23. Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr rebelled when Yazeed was appointed Caliph, and people supported him. He took his position at the Kaabah and fought until he was killed.⁹⁶ He was not given any promise or covenant. Could not Ali or al-Hasan do the same as their cousin, Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, remembering that they were present when the Prophet delivered his speech at Ghadeer Khumm.
24. Those people, who are alleged to have betrayed the Prophet and discarded their covenant and the commitment they gave him, are none other than the people who embraced Islam and followed God's messenger when he was alone in Makkah. Few as they were, they stood in support of the Prophet against the entire world. At no time did they hesitate in their choice, which was based on certainty and clear vision. They were defending God's message and His messenger, they did not care if they lost everything they had. Hence, they were ready to sacrifice themselves, time after time, motivated by their strong faith. They firmly believed that this person whom they believed in and followed was truly God's messenger, and they unhesitatingly believed that the road he led them along ends up in heaven. They did not care if going his way meant that they lost everything in this world.

96 Ali al-Sallabi, *Khilafat Ameer al-Mu'mineen Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr*, p. 39.

Is it conceivable that these very people would alter what they believed in, discard their commitment to the Prophet and abandon their covenant for some transitory gain in this present life?

These people were ready to believe whatever the Prophet said more than they believed what they saw with their own eyes and felt with their senses. They were told that Muhammad travelled from Makkah to Jerusalem and back on the same night, and they said without hesitation: ‘If he has said so, then he is telling the truth.’⁹⁷

Is it conceivable that after he had given them instructions and made an appointment to which they had all agreed, they would discard this? After all, they had discarded the world and all that it could offer for their belief in him and what he promised them.

Consider their jihad after the Prophet’s death, particularly against the apostate rebels and those who made false claims to be prophets. Even when they were very thirsty and could not have a drop of water these companions of the Prophet fought hard and were ready to die for their faith. They believed that their fight was a continuation of their jihad with the Prophet. In their battle against Musaylamah and his troops, they put on

97 Abd al-Razzaq, Al-Musannaf, hadith No. 9,719; al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, pp. 65 and 81; Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 2, p. 245; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwah, vol. 2, pp. 360–361.

their shrouds, ready to be buried in them, and applied to themselves what is normally applied to dead people, then stepped forward, ready to die in defence of the faith given to them by the Prophet. A large number of the best among them were killed in this battle. Indeed, the majority of those who were killed were the reciters of the Qur'an who had learnt it by heart. Is it conceivable that those Qur'anic scholars would lay down their lives to defend a Caliph who usurped the right of someone else and went back on his promise to the Prophet?

25. The early Muslims exposed themselves to great pressures merely for accepting Islam, and they endured torture and pressure for God's sake. Subsequently, they left their home towns, lost all their property and travelled with God's messenger to live in a different city, where they had no homes or property. It was a migration to the unknown, motivated only by their certainty of faith and their trust that what God and His messenger had promised would come true. Can anyone imagine that they went through all this for worldly gain? They had abandoned everything they had for God's sake. Could they, towards the end of their lives and after their journey with the Prophet, seeing him as he received revelations from on high and witnessing the various miracles that took place during his lifetime, abandon all this for some trifling gain in this world?

26. Ammar ibn Yasir and his parents joined the Prophet and accepted Islam in its very early days. They were among the weakest elements in the hierarchy of the Arabian tribal society, yet they stood very firmly against the arrogant masters of the Quraysh. They withstood all the torture to which they were subjected in order to force them back into idolatry. The mountains around Makkah could give way, but they did not. Sumayyah, Ammar's mother, was thus the first martyr in the history of Islam, followed soon afterwards by her husband, Yasir. As they were being tortured the Prophet passed by, but he could do nothing to help them. He did not promise them anything in this world, but gave them the promise of the future happiness that they believed in its reality. He said: 'Persevere, Yasir's family: your promised abode is paradise.'⁹⁸

Ammar survived the torture and migrated with the Prophet. The Prophet gave him the good news that he would stick to the path of the truth when strife would prevail. He said to him: 'God help Ammar. He will be killed by the side in the wrong.'⁹⁹

When Ali was chosen as Caliph, Ammar was with him, and when Ali fought, Ammar fought with him even though he was nearly ninety-four years of age. When

98 Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, pp. 319–320; Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 439; al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, pp. 383 and 388; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwah, vol. 2, p. 282.

99 Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 6,538; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 447 and 2,812; Muslim, hadith No. 2,916.

he held his spear, his hand was shaking. As he was fighting in Ali's army, he said: 'By Him who holds my soul in His hand, I have fought with God's messenger under this banner three times and this is the fourth. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, if they were to beat us forcing us on the retreat as far back as the date trees in Alhasa, I still know that our good people are defending what is right and our enemies are in error.'¹⁰⁰

Can we imagine that someone with such firm belief and such love of Ali could pledge his loyalty to anyone other than Ali, had he witnessed a covenant made by the Prophet in favour of Ali's succession, or had he given such commitment? Was it improper for Ammar to say to Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman that they had assumed a role that belonged to someone else, discarding the pledges and commitments made to the Prophet, if any such pledges or commitments had ever been given? What could Ammar have feared when he had withstood the grievous torture that claimed the lives of both his parents?

Ammar laid down his life, despite his weakness in old age, to fulfil the pledge he had given to Ali. He was certainly more likely to do the same in fulfilment of a pledge given to God's messenger, had there been any such pledge, in favour of Ali and his succession.

¹⁰⁰ Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 18,884; al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, pp. 384, 386 and 392; al-Tayalisi, hadith No. 678.

27. At the time of al-Ghadeer, al-Hasan ibn Ali was eight years of age. He was at an age when he was aware of what was taking place and knew its significance. Indeed, his parents were in the Prophet's company during his pilgrimage. I believe al-Hasan was close to his father when the Prophet gave his speech as God's messenger, and he saw his father as the Prophet was holding his hand. He must have listened to what the Prophet said and understood it. al-Hasan later became the Caliph and was in that position for six months before stepping down, despite the fact that he was the one with the strongest claim to it, in favour of Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan so as to restore unity to the Muslim community and to ensure that the Islamic state remained powerful. Could he have stepped down as he did if he had heard the Prophet appointing Ali as his successor? Could he have given it to anyone else?

To entertain any thought that he could have done this after becoming aware that the Prophet gave such a covenant is a great insult to al-Hasan himself. Who could blame the people if they went back on their commitment when the one who was the beneficiary of that commitment relinquished it in favour of someone else? Far be it from him and them!

Compare this to Uthman's attitude. He was chosen as Caliph after a process of consultation and acceptance by the Muslim community. No prior covenant or

commitment was made in his favour. Yet when he was besieged in his home and the rebels asked him to step down he refused, honouring the pledge he was given by the Muslim community. He preferred to be killed, rather than go back on his commitment.

Al-Hasan was the Prophet's own grandson, as his mother was the Prophet's daughter and his father was loved by God and His messenger, to whom every believer, man and woman, owed allegiance. Is it conceivable that as Caliph he would have stepped down if the Caliphate belonged to his father by instructions given by God's messenger? As grandson of the Prophet, he could not have taken an attitude different from that of Uthman, had he been forced into such a choice. He would have fought to the finish in defence of the Prophet's covenant, had there been any such covenant.

28. Besides, there was a party that could not have been accused of any partisanship in the matter. This party consisted of the Prophet's wives, the mothers of the believers. They had been given a choice between two alternatives, as stated in God's book, the Qur'an: 'Prophet! Say to your wives: "If you desire the life of this world and its charms, I shall provide for you and release you in a becoming manner; but if you desire God and His Messenger and the life of the hereafter, know that God has readied great rewards for those of you who do good." (33: 28–29) Every one of them made her choice without hesitation, choosing God and His messenger and

the life of the hereafter, even if that meant abandoning every comfort that this world could give.

In consequence, God commended them in an address to the Prophet (peace be upon him), stating that He was pleased with them as his wives and telling him not to marry anyone else: ‘You [Muhammad] are not permitted to take any further wives, nor to exchange these for other wives, even though you are attracted by their beauty.’ (33: 52) The Prophet never substituted any new wife for any of them, nor did he divorce any. God made them ‘mothers of the believers’ to all generations until the Day of Judgement. He said: ‘The Prophet has more claim on the believers than they have on their own selves; and his wives are their mothers.’ (33: 6) God made clear that they were not allowed to marry anyone else after His messenger: ‘Moreover, it does not behove you to give offence to God’s Messenger, just as it would not behove you ever to marry his widows after he has passed away. That is certainly an enormity in God’s sight.’ (33: 53) Thus we know that they are his wives in this present life and in the life to come as well. May God be pleased with them all.

The Prophet’s wives belonged to different tribes. Six of them belonged to the Quraysh, while Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith was from the al-Mustalaq tribe, Safiyah bint Huyayy was an Israelite from the Jewish tribe of al-Nadeer, and Maymoonah bint al-Harith belonged to the Hilal tribe. The six Qurayshi wives of the

Prophet belonged to six different clans: Taym, Adiy, Makhzoom, Amir, Asad and Umayyah. All of them accompanied God's messenger for his farewell pilgrimage, and they heard his speech at Ghadeer Khumm, like the rest of the Muslims travelling with him.

Praised as they were by God for their devotion and dedication, they could not have declined to be witnesses, or approved the discarding of any covenant or disobey any instructions. They abandoned all the comforts the world can give, preferring to please God and His messenger. Is it conceivable, then, that they would remain silent if they realized that the Prophet's covenant had been violated and discarded? Had there been any such covenant, they would have spoken out against its violation. Coming from diverse backgrounds, as they did, they could not be accused of siding with any particular group against Ali. Nor could they have preferred anyone else to the one the Prophet nominated as his successor, if any such nomination was made.

29. Only eighty-four days separated the event at Ghadeer Khumm with the Prophet's death and the appointment of Abu Bakr as his successor. This is a very short period and the overwhelming majority of the people who had attended the event were still alive and in full command of their memories. No great change had come over the general situation, so as to justify any shift in the Muslim community. How could such a large number of people attend God's messenger, as he made his

speech, then after such a short period discover that the covenant and commitment they had made, if any, had been discarded and not a single one of them voice an objection, or even wonder at the turn of events. Is this possible in any generation, let alone the generation of the Prophet's companions – which was characterized by its love of the Prophet and diligent obedience of his instructions?

30. Surah 110, entitled *Al-Nasr* [i.e. Divine Help], was revealed to the Prophet and carried the good news of the completion of his mission as Prophet and God's messenger, once the signs mentioned had been completed. It then prepared him for his departure from this life. It says: 'When God's help and victory come, and you see people embracing God's religion in large numbers then extol your Lord's limitless glory, and praise Him, and seek His forgiveness. He is the One who accepts repentance.' (110: 1–3) This surah gave the Prophet the good news that the faith was complete and people would accept it and adhere to it.

What can anyone make of such 'good news' if people's embrace of Islam in large numbers is proved to be an exercise in hypocrisy: they would pledge their loyalty, declare their solemn commitment, and shortly afterwards they would go back on the most solemn of their pledges and commitments on the day when the Prophet passed away.

Is it possible that God gave His messenger the ‘good news’ of people embracing the faith in large numbers and order him to show his gratitude by glorifying God and praying for forgiveness, when He knows that they would turn back and discard his covenant on the day of his death?

What sort of divine help and victory is this if the best of the Prophet’s companions, who helped to achieve that victory, would give the Prophet their commitment to honour their pledges then go back on these very pledges and commitments even before he is buried? What would be the case of those who came after them and embraced Islam?

That could have never been the case with the good news given by God to His messenger at the end of his life, with his continuous striving for God’s cause coming in its final days. It was indeed very good news, telling the Prophet that the divine faith and message will keep its place in human life for the rest of time. The mission assigned to Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is the delivery of God’s message, had been completed and his time was approaching to depart this life. The messenger will go, but the message will remain. The advocate will die but what he has advocated will live on.

The same may be said about the verses that promise that this religion will prevail over all other religions and

the Prophet would receive God's support: 'It is He who has sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that He may cause it to prevail over all other religions, however hateful this may be to the idolaters.' (9: 33 and 61: 9) How could the religion be said to prevail if it were to be abandoned on the day of the Prophet's demise, even before he is bathed, wrapped in a shroud and buried? It is certainly abandoned if the most solemn commitment he sought and was given, calling on God to witness it, is thus disregarded and broken. This is no form of prevailing as God intended, and it is no fulfilment of the promise given in the Qur'an. The Qur'an gave the Prophet the good news that the divine message and the Islamic faith, which he delivered to mankind, will remain intact, forever, as he delivered them and as people committed themselves to uphold.

31. When we present the history of the Prophet's mission as he advocated God's message, we say that his was the greatest and most spectacular achievement in the history of mankind. Within a very short period, Prophet Muhammad took people out of darkness into the light, enabled them to embrace the divine faith in large numbers, and nurtured a unique, model generation that was superior to all generations. Those who responded to his call and supported him were true believers. They loved him more than they loved their own parents. Hence, the moves of apostasy that took place in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula immediately

after the Prophet's death were limited and short lived. Once these were put down, the Prophet's companions spread out, preaching his faith and delivering the divine message to mankind.

The certainty of all this is further strengthened in our hearts today whenever we hear the call to prayer, stating: 'I bear witness that Muhammad is God's messenger,' throughout the world, in every place and by people of all races. We say: this Prophet has certainly a unique position of honour with God, who says in reference to his messenger: 'Have We not given you high renown?' (94: 4)

This version of the event at al-Ghadeer, making it an appointment of succession, and the way that it ended, with the pledges broken, the covenant discarded and the commitments dishonoured in an act of blatant treachery, implies that the Prophet's mission was a total failure. It shows him to have achieved no real results. His companions declared their belief in his message in its early days, helped others to embrace Islam, lived with God's messenger throughout his life as a prophet, migrated with him, strove alongside him and concluded their lives by offering the pilgrimage with him. Yet when he takes pledges from those very people and makes a covenant with them, this all ends in a betrayal that shows their faith to be nothing but well concealed hypocrisy! This suggests that his achievement was no

more than surrounding himself with a group of hypocrites who deceived him. On his death they showed their true colours: seeking worldly gains. All that they saw of the Prophet and the miracles they witnessed neither convinced them of the truth of his message nor motivated them to honour their commitments to him or implement his faith.

This version presents a miserable image of the Prophet's achievements during the period of advocacy, perseverance and education he spent with his community.

If this version were true, who would have the courage to advocate Prophet Muhammad's faith at any time? What will people say to us if we call on them to accept this version of Islam, showing it as a message that failed to convince even those who were closest to the messenger who delivered it? What will they say when they are told that all those who pretended to believe in it were false, trying to deceive the Prophet and awaiting their turn. Betraying him and discarding their pledges to him on the day of his death. Had they believed he was really a Prophet delivering a true message from God, they would have honoured their promises to him during his life and after his death.

In this respect, the late Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Hasani Nadwi, a leading scholar of the twentieth century, wrote a scholarly thesis: 'Two contrasting images given by the

Sunni people and the Imami Shia of the results of the efforts of the greatest messenger in advocacy and education, and of the conduct of the first model generation.'

32. To relate the story in this way involves accusing the Prophet of naivety, showing him as being deceived by those who were closest to him and his oldest companions. They made promises to him and gave him their commitment while all the time he was totally unaware that they actually intended to deceive him. This was indeed what the hypocrites charged him with when they said of him: 'He is all ear.' They meant that he was easily deceived by sweet words. However, God refuted their charge, saying: 'He is an ear listening to what is good for you.' (9: 61)

When we read the Prophet's history, we realize that he was never deceived by anyone. What he could not discover by his own personal means, he was informed of through revelation. A person like Prophet Muhammad, who could make great historical achievements and assume the leadership of mankind, could not be a simpleton who is easily deceived by people harbouring ill intentions.

33. One Shia scholar described the situation in Madinah absolutely correctly, saying that Ali was not the ruler just for the period in which he was the Caliph. He actually shared in government during the time of all three Caliphs who preceded him.

This is certainly correct, confirmed by the facts that Abu Bakr did not send Ali as chief commander of the Muslim armies that fought the apostate rebels, nor did Umar and Uthman send him to command the armies that fought against the Persian and Byzantine empires. Had they appointed him to command these armies, he would have been unbeatable. They wanted him in Madinah to play a role that was far more important. He shared with them the running of the affairs of the state. As such, he was a partner in all the achievements of the Caliphs who preceded him.

If there was any pledge or commitment given to the Prophet regarding who would be the ruler after him, and Ali was such a top advisor to the three Caliphs, would he not have made his most important advice to tell those Caliphs to fulfil their commitment and pledges given to the Prophet?

34. Ali was known to take issue with the Caliphs and declare his views when he differed with them. For example, Ali strongly objected to Umar when he wanted to punish a mad woman who had committed adultery. Ibn Abbas reports: ‘Ali passed by a mad woman who had committed adultery and Umar had ordered to be punished by stoning. Ali ordered that she should be sent back home. He said to Umar: “Are you going to stone this woman?” He said: “Yes.” Ali said: “Do you not remember that the Prophet said: ‘Exempt are three people: a mad person who is not in command of his

faculties; a sleeping person until he wakes up and a young person until he or she attains puberty.” Umar said: “You are right.” He let her go free.¹⁰¹ Umar used to worry that he might face a problem when Ali was not present to advise him.¹⁰²

Ali also objected to Uthman when he ordered that people should not perform the *tamattu*‘ method when they did the pilgrimage. Sa‘eed ibn al-Musayyib related: Ali and Uthman differed with regarding to the *tamattu*‘ when they were at Usfan. Uthman issued an order preventing the combination of the pilgrimage with the umrah, while Ali used to encourage that. Uthman said to Ali: ‘Do you not know that I gave an order against it?’ Ali said: ‘I know.’ Uthman asked: ‘Would you do it when I have issued this order?’ Ali said: ‘What authority do you have to prevent something that the Prophet himself did?’ Uthman said: ‘Let this be.’ Ali said: ‘I cannot let it be. I heard God’s messenger declaring the intention to do the two duties together. I would not abandon the Prophet’s Sunnah for anyone’s sake.’ Uthman said: ‘You are right, but we were in fear at the time.’ When Ali realized that Uthman insisted, he declared his intention to do the two duties together.¹⁰³

101 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 1,183, 1,328 and 1,362; Abu Dawood, hadith Nos 4,399–4,403; al-Tirmidhi, hadith No. 1,423 and Ibn Majah, hadith No. 2,041.

102 Ibn Saad, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 2, p. 293; Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, vol. 13, p. 343.

103 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 402, 431 and 1,146; al-Bukhari, hadith No. 1,563; Muslim, hadith No. 1,223; al-Tayalisi, hadith No. 96.

Ali's words shine for all time: 'I would not abandon the Prophet's Sunnah for anyone's sake.' Would he have kept quiet for anyone's sake if there was any pledge or commitment given to the Prophet? Is it conceivable that a person who declares his disagreement on such matters of detail could remain silent on the issue of the choice of the Prophet's successors? Had there been any pledge or covenant nominating the Prophet's successor, Ali would have spoken out in opposition to what was done because this was a far more important issue than the questions of detail over which he disagreed with the Caliphs.

35. When Abu Bakr assumed the post of Caliph, Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, asked him for her share of what the Prophet left behind of his own share of the gains that accrued without war. Abu Bakr said to her: 'God's messenger had said that prophets are not inherited. Whatever they leave goes to charity.' Abu Bakr refused to give her anything, which made Fatima angry and she boycotted Abu Bakr until she passed away, only six months after the Prophet.¹⁰⁴

Fatimah, the first lady of mankind, never hesitated to demand what she considered to be right. She declared her views and made clear that she was upset with Abu Bakr. All this concerned an inheritance from the Prophet, so she would certainly have reminded Abu

104 Related by Ahmad, hadith Nos 3,092, 3,711, 3,712 and 9,093; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,092, 3,093, 3,711 and 3,712; Muslim, hadith No. 1,759.

Bakr of any pledge given to her husband concerning his succession. If she could take such an attitude concerning inheritance, could not Ali, her husband, demand the fulfilment of any covenant made by the Prophet?

36. The relationship between Ali and Abu Bakr was a friendly one, characterized by mutual love and respect. This is well demonstrated in the incident when both came out of the mosque after Asr prayer. Abu Bakr saw Ali's son, al-Hasan, playing with other children in the street. He held the child and lifted him onto his shoulders, chanting: 'He certainly looks like the Prophet, and unlike his father, Ali'. Ali was walking beside him, smiling with delight.¹⁰⁵

The close relationship between them is evidenced by the fact that Ali named one of his children after Abu Bakr. This son, Abu Bakr ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib, lived until he was killed alongside his brother, al-Husayn ibn Ali, at Karbala.¹⁰⁶ It is further evidenced by the fact that Ali married Abu Bakr's widow, Asma' bint Umays,¹⁰⁷ and took good care of her young son, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr. This son of Abu Bakr was very attached to his stepfather, Ali, and supported him. He was in Ali's army which fought the battles of al-Jamal

105 Related by Ahmad, hadith No. 40; al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,542 and 3,750.

106 Ibn Saad, Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, vol. 6, p. 442; al-Tabari, Tarikh, vol. 5, p. 468.

107 Abd al-Razzaq, Al-Musannaf, hadith No. 7,950; Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wal-nihayah, vol. 6, pp. 444–445.

and Siffin and he commanded the infantry in the Battle of al-Jamal. Ali appointed him governor of Egypt and was grieved when Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr was killed. He said: ‘I considered him like a son. He was a brother and the son of a brother. We submit to God’s will.’¹⁰⁸

Again, the relationship between Ali and Umar, the second Caliph, was very close and based on mutual respect. It is clearly evidenced by the fact that Umar married Umm Kulthoom, Ali and Fatimah’s daughter.¹⁰⁹

Umar proposed this marriage to Ali because he was keen to be in a family relationship with the Prophet. He said: ‘I heard God’s messenger say: “Every relationship and lineage is severed on the Day of Judgement except my relationship and lineage.” Therefore, I love to have some relationship with God’s messenger.’¹¹⁰

Umm Kulthoom gave Umar a son, Zayd [the elder], and a daughter, Ruqayyah. Zayd died as a young man on the same day as his mother.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Abu Nu’aym, *Ma’rifat al-Sahabah*, vol. 1, p. 168; Ibn al-Atheer, *Usd al-Ghabah*, vol. 5, p. 97.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ishaq, *Al-Sirah*, vol. 1, p. 248; Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 10, p. 429; Ibn al-Atheer, *Usd al-Ghabah*, vol. 7, p. 377.

¹¹⁰ Abd al-Razzaq, *Al-Musannaf*, hadith No. 10,354; al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 142; al-Albani, *Al-Silsilah al-Saheehah*, hadith No. 2,036.

¹¹¹ Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 10, p. 429; al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, vol. 7, pp. 111–112 and *Dala’il al-Nubuwah*, vol. 7, p. 283; Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, vol. 19, p. 483.

An aspect of the close relationship between Ali and Umar is the fact that one of Ali's children is named Umar. He was born during Umar's reign and it was Umar who chose his name and gave him a slave, called Muwarriq. Ali approved of all this. Umar ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib died during the reign of al-Waleed ibn Abd al-Malik when he was over seventy years of age.¹¹²

When Umar passed away and was placed on his bed, Ali stood by him and prayed to God to have mercy on him. He said: 'There is no one with whose work I would love to meet God than you. By God, I think that God will place you in company with your two friends [i.e. the Prophet and Abu Bakr]. I often heard the Prophet say: "I went with Abu Bakr and Umar; I entered with Abu Bakr and Umar; I left with Abu Bakr and Umar."¹¹³

Could Ali have had such an intimate and friendly relationship with Abu Bakr and Umar if he felt that they had usurped his right and gone back on the pledges they gave to the Prophet?

37. When the Prophet passed away, there were a good number of important figures of the Hashimite clan to which both the Prophet and Ali belonged. These

¹¹² Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Maqtal Ali, p. 127; Ibn Asakir, Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 45, p. 304.

¹¹³ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith No. 3,685; Muslim, hadith No. 2,389.

included the Prophet's uncle, al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, and his three sons, al-Fadl, *Qutham* and Abdullah. There were also Aqeel ibn Abu Talib, Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Rabee'ah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib and several others. There were also several cousins from the clan of al-Muttalib ibn Abd Manaf. The Prophet had said of these two clans: 'The Hashimite and the al-Muttalib clans are one and the same'¹¹⁴ How come that none of them voiced an objection? How come that they did not take a collective stand, demanding that the covenant the Prophet made in favour of Ali must be honoured? It is well known that these two clans maintained very close relations. Indeed, when the Prophet was in Makkah advocating his faith, the Quraysh imposed a social and economic boycott on him and his clan. Both the Hashim and al-Muttalib clans closed ranks in support of the Prophet, including those of them who had not accepted Islam. With such an attitude, they would have given Ali full support, particularly if he had a covenant made by the Prophet and a pledge made in his presence.

38. Muhammad Rasheed Rida made some very relevant comments in his explanation of the Qur'anic verse that says: 'Messenger, proclaim what has been revealed to you by your Lord. For, unless you do it fully, you will not have delivered His message. God will protect you

¹¹⁴ Related by al-Bukhari, hadith Nos 3,140, 3,502 and 4,229.

from all men. God does not guide those who reject faith.¹¹⁵ (5: 67):

We are absolutely certain that had there been any statement in the *Qur'an* or the *Hadith* concerning the choice of ruler this would have been widely reported. Such an issue could not have been surrounded by such controversy and Ali would have assumed the leadership on the day of the Prophet's death, addressing the people and reminding them of the *Qur'anic* or *Hadith* statement, if any. He would have explained to them what should have been explained at that time. This was his duty, had he believed that he should be the successor to the Prophet on the basis of a command made by God and His messenger.

He did not say anything of the sort, nor did any of his relatives and supporters who preferred him. They made no such objection on the day of the meeting at al-Saqeefah or when Umar assigned the question of his succession to the six-man committee. Nor did any of them voice any such view at any earlier or subsequent time, not even during his own reign. He was a man who stated what he believed to be right, fearing no blame by anyone. He never

115 The Shia version of the event at al-Ghadeer claims that when the Prophet was ordered by God to announce that Ali would be his successor, he feared the people's reaction and did not make the announcement. This verse was revealed to him, and he then made his speech at Ghadeer Khumm.

resorted to any pretence, in word or deed. All such matters were invented later, with reports fabricated to provide evidence in support of groups and factions.

The announcement of succession is totally irrelevant to the context of argument with the people of earlier revelations in which this verse occurs. The superior style of the Qur'an does not admit it. Had the Prophet wanted to nominate his successor and make this known to the people, he would have stated this in the speech he delivered in his farewell pilgrimage. In that speech, the Prophet asked the people to testify to the fact that he delivered his message. They gave him their testimony and he called on God to be his witness.

Yet, regardless of the context or the verses preceding or following it, the verse itself does not accept that its order 'to proclaim' given to the Prophet refers to any proclamation that Ali would be the Prophet's successor. What is clearly apparent in the verse is that it is an order to proclaim the message to mankind in the early days of Islam. This is very clear when we examine the verse without any prior conception.

As for the *hadith*, we certainly accept it and give our allegiance to Ali and those who supported him, and we are hostile to anyone he considered to be his

enemy. We consider this in the same way as supporting God's messenger. We believe that the Prophet's immediate family could not have agreed to depart from the Qur'an which God revealed to His messenger. The Qur'an and the Prophet's immediate family are the Prophet's successors. An authentic *hadith*, other than that of the event at al-Ghadeer, states that. Therefore, when these unanimously express something, we accept it, and when they differ, we refer the matter to God and His messenger.¹¹⁶

39. Today, when we look at history and the great events and changes that took place over the years, we are certain that it was an aspect of God's grace and a manifestation of His wisdom that the Prophet did not nominate any successor. The management of state policy, the choice of ruler and methods of government are worldly matters, subject to diverse views according to prevailing conditions and circumstances. The Prophet departed this life without an express statement giving the succession to any one of his companions. Abu Bakr was chosen through limited consultation. Umar was appointed by his predecessor, after consultation with the leading figures in society. Uthman was chosen through a process of public consultation, and Ali was elected by the people. At that time, there was no one who could be chosen ahead of him. He was succeeded by his son, al-Hasan, who then stepped down to ensure

¹¹⁶ M.R. Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 6, pp. 384–387. The quotation is abridged.

the unity of the Muslim community. Later, al-Husayn claimed the post of Caliph in order to save the Muslim community.

The fact that all these different methods of choosing the ruler were resorted to over a brief period indicates that methods of choice may vary, as may suit every age.

It is a manifestation of divine wisdom and the flexibility of Islamic law that no text specifies a method of choosing rulers. This leaves a broad area for discretion which should be used so as to suit people's preferences and human development.

AL-GHADEER AND THE DUTY OF REASONING

It is unacceptable that our history should be reported like legends and superstitions. Nor is it acceptable that reports and historical accounts should not be subjected to proper examination and reasoning. It is imperative that we think clearly about our beliefs, particularly when we report what is attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and to Ali, to whom we owe full support and allegiance.

Reports attributed to the Prophet constitute part of our faith. They complement the religion we believe in and influence our feelings of love and hate, friendship and hostility. They determine our way in this life, leading to our destiny in the life to come.

One's faith and religion and the path one takes towards God must not be isolated from his thinking and reasoning. Religious requirements operate only for a person with reason. To think is an Islamic duty. The most important area that is addressed by the mind is the decision a person takes regarding following the right faith and the way he or she worships

God. This is indeed the most serious and most valuable of human endeavour. It is not right that man should use his mind to determine his choices in worldly matters and at the same time not use his mind in regard to his faith and the life to come.

Nowhere is man urged to use his mind more than in the Qur'an, and nothing gives rational thinking greater importance than Qur'anic verses. This is because thinking and reasoning lead to the acceptance of Islam and to keeping the faith pure. On the other hand, Islam considers thinking and reasoning a personal duty. There is nothing in the Islamic faith that the human mind rejects, but it includes what the human mind may not comprehend.

The Qur'an always mentions the mind in terms of praise and encourages action based on reason and proper thinking. Here are a few examples of verses calling on people to use their minds: 'The life of this world is nothing but a sport and a passing delight. Surely the life in the hereafter is by far the better for those who are God-fearing. Will you not, then, use your reason?' (6: 32) 'He grants wisdom to whom He wills. He who is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good. Yet only those with sound minds would take heed.' (2: 269) 'See how We make plain Our revelations so that they may understand.' (6: 65) 'Will they not, then, try to understand the Qur'an? Or are there locks on their hearts?' (47: 24)

These verses and similar ones, which are numerous in the Qur'an, institute the duty of thinking that Islam requires. They show us that Islam addresses the mind that appreciates facts,

distinguishes matters, compares cases, weighs alternatives, reflects, and contemplates. This is the mind that stands in contrast to rigidity, stubbornness and error. The Qur'an does not address the mind that contrasts with madness.

It is important to remember that the frequent Qur'anic references to the mind and reason are not coincidental. Nor are they merely repetitive. The importance given to the mind is necessitated by the very nature of the Islamic faith. Whoever knows the nature of Islam and the status it gives to man realizes that it is logical for Islam to attach such importance to the mind and its working.

What obstructs the mind and prevents thinking about the most important question in human life is to opt to unthinkingly follow others, letting them choose our religion and what we believe in. These may be our forefathers, or the society in which we grow up. Islam does not accept the argument that our forefathers have set us on a certain path and we should follow it. It deprecates the attitude that some people adopt, relieving themselves of the task of thinking, simply because they have inherited a faith that does not admit thinking: 'When it is said to them, "Follow what God has revealed", they say, "No; but we will follow only what we found our forefathers believing in." Why, even if their forefathers did not use reason at all, and followed no guidance.' (2: 170)

We should certainly be dutiful to our parents and honour them, but this is different from blindly following them in their erring ways. A wise person knows the difference between the two.

The same applies to following the prevailing beliefs in the society surrounding us without logically examining them and subjecting them to careful reasoning. To liberate ourselves from the yoke of society requires alert thinking, strong will and determination to strive for the truth. God says: ‘But as for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them to paths that lead unto Us. God is indeed with those who do good.’ (29: 69)

When the use of our minds is ordered by the Creator, it is unacceptable that a creature should keep his mind in disuse in order to please another creature, or because one fears that other creature. This applies even in the case when such a creature, to be pleased or feared, is not a single creature but a multitude and we find ourselves in their midst.¹¹⁷

The people who will attend our funerals will place us in our graves and go back home, but we will be alone facing the results of our lives. The people that are now with us will not be with us when we are individually resurrected: ‘On the Day of Resurrection, every one of them will appear before Him all alone.’ (19: 95) And when we stand alone before our Lord, none will be with us: ‘And now, indeed, you have come to Us individually, just as We created you in the first instance.’ (6: 94) Everyone will be preoccupied with one’s own affairs: ‘Each one of them will on that day have enough preoccupations of his own.’ (80: 37) No one will put a plea on behalf of anyone else: ‘One day every soul will come pleading for itself.’ (16: 111)

¹¹⁷ In this chapter I have used some expressions from Abbas al-Aqqad’s book, *Tafkeer Fareedah Islamiyyah*, ‘To think is an Islamic duty’.

God will not question us about following any person, great as that person may be, except Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). We will be asked about him only: ‘On that day, He will call to them and ask: “What answer did you give to My messengers?”’ (28: 65) We certainly need to use our minds and exert our best efforts so that we can be certain that we give the right answer to the one about whom we shall be questioned. We cannot achieve such certainty unless we request it from the One who owns it and is able to grant it. We need to pray for it, in the hope that in the life to come we will take our positions in the right place and say: ‘All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path.’ (7: 43) When we pray for guidance, our prayer should be honest and sincere, and we should be in true submission so that God will enlighten our minds and guide our hearts.

Our Lord, place us among the people You guide. Guide us on the straight path. Our Lord, guide us to the truth concerning which people differ, for You guide whom You will to the straight path.

Our Lord, we believe in what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow the messenger, so write us down among those who bear witness to the truth.

Our Lord! Forgive us and forgive our brethren who preceded us in faith. Leave no malice in our hearts towards those who believe. Lord, You are compassionate, ever merciful.

In conclusion I say: All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

THIS BOOK

1. The first time I thought of writing this book was during a discussion with Brother Hamad al-Ghammas, about twenty years ago. It was his idea, but it continued to grow in my mind as I thought about it, or did some related research, or spoke about it to students or with a friend. This book is the total sum of these occasions.

2. When the book was still merely an idea, I discussed it with a number of my brothers who are interested in the subject. As a result, the idea expanded and became better defined. When it was completed, I consulted a number of my brothers and teachers. I greatly benefited by their observations, corrections and contributions. I incorporated these and made some amendments. May God reward them all for their effort. Every one of us can do only very little on his own, but he can do much better with help from his friends and brethren.

3. When I quote *hadiths* I try to consolidate the various reports into a single narrative, as I did in my two earlier books: *On Pilgrimage.. in the Prophet's Company* and *Images of Life with Muhammad*. When I mention several sources for

a *hadith* I mean that the text I am mentioning is taken from them all, but it is not necessarily in full in any one source. I gave details of this method in the 'Postscript' of *On Pilgrimage.. in the Prophet's Company*.

4. I have endeavoured as best I can to choose the most authentic texts. I may add some reports whose chains of transmission suffer from some weakness, but these complement what the authentic reports provide, unless the text of such reports that lack authenticity appears outlandish. When diverse reports are consolidated in a full version, the weakness that is inherent in some of them is exposed, as it would not fit with what is authentic. On the other hand, such consolidation may strengthen reports that have some questionable reporters, because the meaning they give is correct and supported by other authentic reports.

5. I have not pursued exhaustive research, as this would lead to diversions. I aimed to consolidate the different reports of the *hadith* so as to present the story of the events in full, with its prior and consequent details, expressing the feelings of love and support for Ali ibn Abu Talib, our master who is loved by our Lord and His messenger. We are indeed commanded to love and support him. I have aimed for a clear presentation of the idea of this book, writing it with a flowing narrative, and to make it as concise as possible. I endeavoured to highlight the Prophet's objective in what he said and what he ordered. I pray to God to make my effort sincere and my words true. He is the all-knowing, the wise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deep gratitude to my teachers and brothers who have looked at the book as it was being written, and who have contributed to it with some corrections and additions. They are partners in what the reader is perusing. Thanks are due to the following:

My brother, Shaikh Hamad al-Ghammas. He was the one who presented me with the idea of this book nearly twenty years ago, and then revised it, adding some important ideas. He is the author of this book before its author and the one who perfected it after it was written. May God grant him ample reward.

Shaikh al-Shareef Hatim al-Awni proposed some important additions which I have added in their respective places.

My teachers, Shaikh Salih al-Shami and Dr Ahmad al-Bar'a' al-Ameeri, and my brothers, Dr Khalid al-Bihlal, Husain Bafaqeeh, Dr Abdullah al-Subaih, Dr Khalid al-Duwaish, Shaikh Yasir al-Mutrifi, Shaikh Khalid al-Wassabi and Dr Sami al-Majid furnished me with their observations and corrections which were highly valuable.

Shaikh Mahmood Shaaban Abd al-Maqsood provided me with the citations of the *hadiths*.

My brother, Salih al-Fawzan, made a valuable contribution to the style, presentation and cover design of the book.

My gratitude is also due to the good people who helped me in identifying the place of al-Ghadeer and showing me the area around it. These were Shaikh Ahmad al-Numani, Shaikh Salim al-Ghanimi, Izz al-Deen al-Miski and Mansoor al-Anum.

My brother, Professor of Geography, Dr Miraj Mirza provided me with maps, aerial photos and distances.

To them all my deep gratitude and sincere thanks. May God grant them ample reward and fulfil their wishes.

DEDICATION

To my sister and friend, who was to me a mother alongside my mother. She shared with me the fun of childhood and was my friend throughout my life:

My sister, Muneerah Nasir al-Turairi

And to my partner through life who endures with patience my life burden and gives me unfailing encouragement:

My wife, Haya bint Ali ibn Fawwaz Aal-Musa

In acknowledgement of their sacrifice for which I cannot compensate them. May God reward them for it.

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The site of Ghadeer Khumm in relation to the route the Prophet took for his farewell pilgrimage.

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An aerial view of the site of Ghadeer Khumm which also shows al-Juhfah and Rabigh.

Map of Ghadeer Khumm and its surrounding area.

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The old caravan route between Makkah and Madinah. It is called ‘The Prophets Way’. Ghadeer Khumm is to the east of this route.

Al-Juhfah Valley at the edge of which is Ghadeer Khumm.

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An old photo of Ghadeer Khumm.

An old photo of al-Ghadeer basin.

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An old photo of al-Ghadeer after it was covered by the floods.

The author with Shaikh Salih al-Ghanimi, Abid al-Balladi and Salih al-Ansari of Rabigh, who know the area of Ghadeer Khumm well.

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The location of al-Ghadeer at the edge of al-Haramain railway bridge.

The trees that grow in the valley around Ghadeer Khumm. The Prophet delivered his speech in the shade of two such trees.

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The historian Shaikh Dr Ahmad al-Numani standing at the place which is said to have been the spot where the Prophet offered his prayers at Ghadeer Khumm.

The large trees around Ghadeer Khumm.

